



An investigation into the relationship between the quality of children's  
speech and early years environments.

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## ACRONYMS

The following acronyms have been used throughout this thesis:

BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
BERA	British Educational Research Authority
CLASS	Classroom Assessment Scoring System
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DfE	Department for Education
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ECAT	Every Child a Talker
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ECERS	Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale
ECPERS	Early Childhood Physical Environment Rating Scale
EECERA	European Early Childhood Educational Research Association
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
FS	Forest School
HQE	High-Quality Environment
IC	Indoor Classroom
IELS	The International Early Learning Study
LAD	Language Acquisition Device
LASS	Language Acquisition Support System
MELQO	Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes
MSTTR	Mean Segmental Type-Token Ratio
NDW	Number of Different Words
NE	Natural Environment
OC	Outdoor Classroom
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
POEMS	Preschool Outdoor Environment Measurement Scale
RDLS	Reynell Developmental Language Scales
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal

SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SL	Speech and Language
SLD	Speech and Language Development
SLT	Speech and Language Therapist
SSTEW	Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Well-being scale
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TNW	Total Number of Words
TQAF	Transferable Quality Assessment Framework
TTR	Type-Token Ratio
UK	United Kingdom
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VOCD	Vocabulary Diversity

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### **A PhD is a journey**

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## Abstract

The aim of this study was to ascertain if factors in three different learning environments; indoor classrooms, outdoor classrooms and natural environments, for children aged 3-5 years, are associated with the quality of their utterances and if so, the nature and effects of those factors.

Adopting a theoretical framework of interactionism and a philosophical stance of transcendental idealism, meant that this study built on the belief that knowledge is gained from what is innate and what is experienced, and that development is built on interactions, whilst building on the innate knowledge that already exists. A paradigm of interpretivism ensured as an onlooker the research was undertaken whilst aiming to present views and opinions from multiple perspectives and meanings. Through a phased approach, and by using interviews (n=63) and observations (n=43), data was collected.

This comprehensive study has identified that within the study settings the quality of young children's utterances does differ depending on the environment in which the children are playing and learning, with outdoor classrooms producing the highest quality of utterances. By defining the features of the environments, through interviews, it has been possible to devise a Transferable Quality Assessment Framework (TQAF), comprising of 27 elements. This TQAF identifies and assesses these 27 features across different environments. Through empirical evidence it has been possible to establish that the 27 elements, which fall into the broad areas of resources, the environment and the atmosphere, are needed to constitute a high-quality learning environment for young children's speech and language development. By then analysing young children's lexical diversity alongside the TQAF analysis, it has been possible to argue that there is a positive association between the quality of the environment and the quality of children's utterances within the four study settings. It is argued that it is possible to define a high-quality environment, for the purposes of speech and language development and this definition may be used to enhance practice and improve outcomes for children accordingly.

This thesis contributes to existing scholarship, methodologically by providing a quality rating scale that is transferable between different play and learning environments, and through providing knowledge on how the quality of young children's speech and language is influenced by the environment in which they are immersed.

Key words: speech and language development, high-quality, play and learning environments, multiple perspectives, environmental analysis

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1: Introduction

The focus of the research was on the impact of play and learning environments on the speech and language development (SLD) for children aged 3 – 5 years old within the East Midlands region of England. This chapter provides an overview of the doctoral study which aimed to ascertain if factors in three different play and learning environments for children aged 3-5 years, are associated with the quality of their utterances and if so, the nature and effects of those factors. This chapter outlines the parameters of the study, discussing why decisions were made and will highlight the contextual framework to provide an insight of the rationale behind the study. This introductory chapter also considers the significance of this study and asserts that this is an original project which will enhance the field of early-years by providing a quality rating tool that can be utilised nationally to assess the play and learning environment and its impact on young children's speech and language development, thus striving to improve outcomes for children. The structure of the thesis will also be established.

### 1.2: The study

It is recognised that, currently in England, 23% of young children are not at the expected level of SLD (Finnegan and Warren, 2015) and this can have adverse effects which can last into adulthood (Law *et al.*, 2010). It is therefore imperative that this is an area that is addressed and, although government initiatives have been implemented in England, such as the Every Child A Talker programme (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008b), no noticeable improvements appear to have been made (ICan, 2018). The situation, at the time of writing, is such that Law and Levickis (2018) assert that the area of SLD be considered a public health problem.



Previous studies I have undertaken have highlighted that the environment in which a child plays and learns can impact on the quality of their speech (Richardson, 2014; Richardson and Murray, 2016) and it was therefore important that a more in-depth study be undertaken to establish whether there was an association between the quality of the day-care environment and the quality of a child's speech and language (SL). No other literature appears to exist within this area.

In order to ascertain this, it was necessary to adopt a phased approach. Firstly, to establish what a high-quality environment (HQE) was, with regards to SL. The second phase of the research was to use the findings from phase one, to establish, and pilot, a rating tool that could be used to assess the quality of different environments. My previous work within this area had found that no such quality assessment tool existed, that was able to be transferred between different environments (Richardson and Murray, 2016). Phase three, the final phase, then compared the quality of the speech of young children with the quality ratings of the environments in which they were playing and learning, with the overall aim of discovering if there was an association between the two.

### **1.3: Contextual framework and my positionality**

A contextual framework, according to Rojas Smith *et al.* (2014), exists 'for the purpose of generating novel and compelling [research] questions, as well as to glean fresh insights for research and evaluation design'. In this research project there was no necessity to compile a framework as such, as the 'novel and compelling research question' derived from personal experience.

Before any research could begin it was important to consider my positionality. Throughout my doctoral studies I was a senior lecturer in Early Years and in the privileged situation where I had the opportunity to read and research as an integral part of my role. I also had exposure to conferences and a wider research population which piqued my interest in furthering my studies. Holding a strategic position at national level, on the Early Childhood Studies Degree Network, also gave the ability to

discuss research ideas and processes in an informal, but beneficial, manner. These experiences throughout my studies enhanced my project as I had opportunities for discussion and reflection throughout with those in similar positions to myself. Prior to my employment as a senior lecturer, I owned and managed my own 56 place day nursery. I am therefore fortunate enough to have a great amount of practice wisdom as well as the academic knowledge. Kezar (2002:96) states that these 'multiple overlapping identities' enhance the positionality of the researcher and enhances reflexivity.

This project was designed to evaluate children's language within different play and learning environments and to establish whether the quality of said environments impacted on the quality of the speech. This interest originated from the time where I managed my own setting. The early years setting was in the East Midlands area of England; an area of the country identified by Wilshaw in 2016 as the worst area of the country, particularly with regards to the quality of educational provision (Ofsted, 2016). My setting had a very tiny outside space (approx. 20 square metres). When inspected by Ofsted in 2010, England's inspectorate (Ofsted, 2017), the highest rating that would be awarded was 'good', the second highest possible rating. The inspector stated that an 'outstanding' rating was not possible due to the fact that there was no access to the outdoors. To address this, I purchased a field and the determination to gain an 'outstanding' rating resulted in the establishment of a forest school (FS).

At the same time as this was happening, the setting was also participating in the Every Child A Talker programme, a national initiative in England to improve SL outcomes in young children (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008b). As the setting was paying particular emphasis to the children's SLD I noticed that young children were speaking more when in this natural environment (NE). After researching this further, no literature could be found that analysed the effect of the NE on SL, instead focus appeared to mainly be on physical development (BERA/TACTYC, 2014; Fjortoft, 2004), creativity (Knight, 2011; Sutterby and Frost, 2006) and social interactions (Waite and Pratt, 2013). Independent, small-

scale, research was undertaken to establish whether there was a difference in SL quality (Richardson and Murray, 2016) and this found that children's speech was of a higher quality within a NE.

The 'novel and compelling research questions' were therefore founded: "What constitutes a high-quality learning environment with regards to SLD for young children? And how do factors in the learning environment influence the quality of utterances made by young children?"

Although Rallis and Rossman (2012:95) assert that a contextual framework should provide 'a central argument' it is contended that to begin this research with an argument would start from a point of a pre-considered hypothesis and it was the intention that this research process began with no pre-determined opinions on outcomes. This study adopted an interpretative paradigm (Yin, 2004), seeking multiple perspectives and meanings (see section 4.6), and therefore it was others' opinions that were important. It is therefore stressed that this 'central argument', in the context of this study, is that which argues the need for the research and that the originality of this study deems it worthy of undertaking. Although I had previous research experience within this area I was conscious that this should not impact on expectations.

In the thesis considerations are made around the theoretical framework (section 4.4), philosophical stance (section 4.5) and the paradigm (section 4.6) I adopted, which all contributed to the context of this study and will be discussed in detail throughout subsequent chapters.

The aims, objectives and research questions for the study were as follows.

#### **1.4: Aims, objectives and research questions**

The aim of this study was to ascertain if factors in three different learning environment types for children aged 3-5 years, are associated with the

quality of their utterances and if so, the nature and effects of those factors.

The study objectives were:

1. To identify stakeholders' perspectives on defining features of an indoor classroom (IC) environment, an outdoor classroom (OC) environment and a natural environment (NE) in the field of early childhood in England;
2. To establish the impact of the environment on the quality of young children's utterances;
3. To devise a framework that identifies features of early learning environments that may affect young children's SLD;
4. To establish whether the quality of young children's utterances differ according to specific factors in NEs, IC environments and OC environments and what those specific factors are;
5. To use results from Objectives 1-4 to establish evidence for what constitutes a high-quality learning environment for young children's SLD.

The aim and objectives addressed in this study focused on responding to the following questions:

- RQ1: In the field of early childhood in England, are there distinctive features of an IC environment, an OC environment and a NE, according to stakeholders? If so, what are these features?
- RQ2: What are the impacts of the different environments on the quality of young children's utterances?
- RQ3: What elements should be included in a framework to distinguish features of learning environments that may affect young children's SLD?
- RQ4: Does the quality of young children's utterances differ according to specific factors in NEs, IC environments and OC environments? What are those specific factors?

- RQ5: What constitutes a high-quality learning environment for young children's SLD?

#### **1.4.1: The age range of participant children**

The children in this study were between 3 and 5 years old. This purposeful selection was due to the fact that children within this age range are, generally, able to speak using a level of language that is understandable and therefore analysable. Halliday (1975:262) reports that at around the age of 30 months a child 'makes the crucial discovery that, with language, he [sic] can both observe and interact with the environment at the same time'. It is therefore asserted that by the age of 36 months the children should be using language at a level that is appropriate to be assessed. At this age they should also be playing and learning within different environments; ICs, OCs, NEs, found in a day care environment. The English Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), (Department for Education, 2017) insists that children access the outdoors on a daily basis and the language analysis within these differing environments was what was required. The EYFS is designed to provide guidelines for children in the range of 0-5 year olds, however under 3-year olds were discounted for this study as their language skills could still be developing (Halliday, 1975). Over the age of five, within England, children tend to be confined to a formal IC for most of the day and therefore, in these instances, do not have exposure to different environments in the same way as the younger children do. From 5 years old, they work to the National Curriculum (Department for Education, 2014a). This is when more formal learning is taking place and less opportunity for play is seen (Holland and Doherty, 2016). This study focused on children's play **and** learning so therefore needed the freedom to collect data on both areas to analyse these opportunities.

#### **1.4.2: Three play and learning environments**

The environments in which children's SL were analysed, and in which the quality of the environment was analysed, were indoor classrooms (ICs),

outdoor classrooms (OCs) and forest schools (FSs)/natural environments (NEs). For the purposes of this study the definition of an indoor environment is that which provides 'instructive learning environments and routines' (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2002:12) within the confines of an enclosed, indoor environment. An OC is defined, for the purpose of this study, as an extension to the indoor environment (Isaacs, 2012) and tends to be, although not necessarily, attached to the IC so that children can move freely between the two environments (McArdle *et al.*, 2013). The third environment, the FS, or NE, is defined as that which is naturally occurring, using natural resources and that which fosters a relationship with the natural world (Wellings, 2012).

These three environments were selected for this study as they were considered to be different enough from each other to provide a comparison and to assist the research process. My previous studies had indicated that children played and conversed differently within these environments (Richardson, 2014; Richardson and Murray, 2016) and this comparison warranted further exploration. Also, these environments are the most commonly accessed by day care settings (Boyd and Hirst, 2015) within England and were therefore deemed purposeful (Robson, 2011) from a sampling perspective. Although it is recognised that children have access to other types of environment when in day care, including libraries, parks, farmyards, playgrounds, these are not so commonplace (Salaman and Tutchell, 2005) and the research would therefore not have been so relevant to English early years practice if these had been focused upon.

#### **1.4.3: Definitions of key terms**

The terms 'play' and 'learning' environments have been used throughout this chapter, and throughout the thesis. Many definitions exist of both phrases (Hutt *et al.*, 1989) however Moyles (2005) alleges that children learn through play and environments should be provided to facilitate both play and learning. Wood (2013:20) goes so far as to say that environments should be provided through 'developing integrated pedagogical approaches' which combine play and learning to maximise

children's development. Play and learning environments, when used within this study therefore, are environments which facilitate both play and learning interchangeably.

When discussing 'speech and language', this thesis recognises this to be a crucial area of development, known as a prime area of development with the English Early Years framework, the EYFS (Department for Education, 2017). Saxton defines language as 'the physical act of producing human speech sounds....including the communication of ideas via speech' (2017:29) and it is this definition that was adopted for the purposes of this study. It is recognised that communication can often fall within this broad area of development (Saxton, 2017) however as this study focussed just on the spoken word, and not on non-verbal aspects, then it was just the SL that was of interest.

Utterances is another term that is frequently used throughout this study, and therefore requires definition. Blakemore (1992:57) asserts that utterances can either be 'explicated' (those that are explicitly communicated) or 'implicated' (implicitly communicated) and although Grice (1989) argues that it is not possible to analyse explicit utterances in isolation from the non-linguistic elements of utterances, this was the case in this study. This is due to the fact that this research focused on the quality of the spoken word, irrespective of context or social situation, and looked purely at the quality of what children said. Utterances therefore, in the context of this study, were those that were explicitly communicated and related purely to the spoken elements of the language.

### **1.5: Element of originality**

This study is significant for the field of Early Years for several reasons. Firstly, at the time of writing, I could find no published studies that considered the impact of the play and learning environments on young children's SLD. Secondly, there are no quality ratings scales in public use, that can analyse the quality of a range of environments in a transferable manner. Current rating scales can be used to analyse the indoor environment (Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS)

(Harms *et al.*, 2005)), they can be used to analyse the OC environment (Preschool Outdoor Environment Measurement Scale (POEMS) (Hestenes *et al.*, 2005)), but they do not transfer between the IC, OC and a NE. It is therefore argued that this study not only brings originality through the aspect of the study of SLD, but also contributes to the ongoing study about what constitutes high-quality provision in terms of supporting young children's SLD.

The rating scale that was devised as a result of this study, the Transferable Quality Assessment Framework (TQAF), will enable early years settings to assess their own environments and consider how they are assisting SLD. It is argued that this will assist professional reflection and should, in turn, result in improved quality within early years environments in regard to helping children to develop SL.

The section that now follows will outline the structure of the thesis, which aims to answer the research question: "What constitutes a high-quality learning environment with regards to SLD for young children and how do factors in the learning environment influence the quality of utterances made by young children?"

## **1.6: Structure of the thesis**

Chapter two, which follows, outlines the literature surrounding SLD and its influences. This chapter considers the literature that surrounds the development of language and asserts, after consideration, that young children learn SL through interaction with others and with the environment (Tomasello, 2003). Chapter two also concludes that the quality of the learning environment has an impact on a child's language development and warrants further exploration.

Chapter three therefore goes on to discuss the concept of HQEs and the importance of such an environment with regards to SLD. The chapter recognises the complexity of defining what constitutes a high-quality play and learning environment and explores the extensive literature that discusses this area. Chapter three scrutinises various quality rating scales



and acknowledges the need for a tool that is transferable between play and learning environments (Richardson and Murray, 2016).

The chapter that follows, chapter four, outlining the methodology of the study, compares paradigms and asserts that interpretivism is appropriate for this research. The chapter alleges that interactionism is the theoretical framework that shapes the study. A rationale is provided throughout the chapter for the adoption of a qualitative approach and the reasons behind the decision to undertake multiple case studies as the selected research strategy is explored. Chapter four also explores my philosophical stance and claims that Kant's (1781, translated by Puhar 1996) transcendental idealism is the approach that is appropriate for this study, as this takes the stance that knowledge is both gained through rationalism and empiricism, which mirrors the theoretical framework of interactionism.

Chapter five discusses the research instruments chosen and discounts the alternatives. The pilot study and sampling procedures are also explored in this chapter. Validity and trustworthiness are deliberated, and the ethical considerations are then looked at fully within chapter six.

When considering the ethics of this study throughout chapter six, it is recognised that there is no such thing as no impact when undertaking any research (Dickson and Roethlisberger, 2003). What the chapter asserts however, is that all considerations were made to ensure that this impact was kept to a minimum. The chapter also argues that equal consideration be given to those non-participants (Richardson, 2019b) to ensure that all individuals involved were offered equal protection from harm.

Chapter seven presents the findings from the first phase of the research and presents stakeholders' views on what is a HQE with regards to SLD for young children.

The chapter that follows, chapter eight, then discusses the findings from chapter seven and considers how these views can develop a Transferable Quality Assessment Framework (TQAF). This chapter then presents the findings from how this TQAF was developed and subsequently piloted, and

reports on the findings from that pilot process. This aligns with the second phase of the study.

Chapter nine presents the findings from phase three; the findings from the language assessment and how this is associated with the quality of the learning environment. Charts and tables indicate how the quality of young children's utterances align with the newly devised TQAF ratings.

The findings presented within chapter nine are then discussed at length within chapter ten, with links made to the literature that was discussed in detail within chapters two and three.

Chapter eleven goes on to address and discuss the limitations of the study, with attention given to the limitations of the research process, the ethical issues that arose and the research process issues that occurred. Reflections on these processes consider how these aspects may have impacted upon the study and discuss how these issues could be overcome should the study be undertaken again in the future.

Chapter twelve, the final chapter, concludes the study and argues that this study adds knowledge to both the field of Early Years and to the research community, in respect of its originality and its findings.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature review 1: Speech and language development and its influences**

#### **2.1: Introduction**

This chapter reviews the literature addressing the theories that underpin early language development and considers the factors that can influence it. Literature that focuses on the role of the environment in supporting SLD is discussed, along with interactions that occur within environments.

The literature has been accessed by using the University of Northampton's library search engines and via the databases EBSCO Host Database and Education Research Complete. Keywords used were; language development, language acquisition, speech and language development, early years, early childhood, environmental impact, FS, NEs, classroom environment, playgrounds, speech problems/disorders, critical periods. Key theory on language development was accessed with no time parameters, however supporting literature was accessed with an initial search focus commencing in the year 2000.

#### **2.2: Innate or a learnt skill?**

When considering SL acquisition, it is, primarily, crucial to explore what is understood by this term and analyse key theory surrounding this area of development. Barrett (1999:1) provides a definition for spoken language as 'a code in which spoken sound is used in order to encode meaning'. There is renowned debate over whether the ability to speak and communicate is a learned behaviour, from the behaviourist perspective (Skinner, 1957) or is a skill that, coming from a nativist perspective, is 'etched into the structure of the brain' (Berk, 2009:359).

Expressive, or spoken, language is said to have originated from the need to communicate in an accessible fashion (Corballis, 2002). The need to communicate in a hunting environment, without the use of hand gestures and in bad light, provided humans with the basic need of speech and it could be argued that in today's culture of multi-tasking and digital age, the same be true. Not only do children therefore need to be able to communicate by speech, but they also need to develop the ability to listen and decode the speech of others; to develop the skill of processing receptive language (Pinker, 1994). Whether both expressive and receptive language and the basics of SLD, are learned or innate skills will now be considered in greater detail.

### **2.2.1: Nativist perspective**

Chomsky (1957), a nativist, advocated that the development of language is a pre-programmed ability of the human brain. He believed that all are born with the innate ability to speak and express themselves via language, and argued that this was the only way in which young children could learn such a wide range of vocabulary in such a short space of time (Skinner *et al.*, 1973). Chomsky (1957) introduced the concept of a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) within the brain, which he believed to be pre-programmed to absorb and compute the components of language. Whitehead (2011:2) goes some way to concur with this theory in her explanation of children being 'pushed into language' by the power of the desire to communicate. Pinker (1994) agrees with Chomsky and asserts that the environment is not necessary for shaping language development, instead the environment is needed to provide the fuel to assist the child to learn the aspects of language. Pinker (1994:18) states:

Language is a complex, specialised skill, which develops in the child spontaneously, without conscious effort or formal instruction, it is deployed without awareness of its underlying logic, is qualitatively the same in every

individual, and is distinct from general abilities to process information or behave intelligently.

Research that highlights that language development appears to be universal, that being children speaking across the world are shown to be saying similar sounds at similar times (Slobin, 1971), goes some way to reinforcing this nativist theory; that language acquisition is innate and develops in a pre-determined order. Wells (2009) also aligns with this theory, suggesting that children are spoken to by others who make grammatical errors when speaking, repeat themselves and interrupt themselves, yet children still manage to learn to speak in a way that can be understood. Rizzolati *et al.* argue that true imitation, with regards to any aspect of development, is not possible as 'the areas mediating low-level and high-level resonance mechanism do not coincide' (2002:260). It could therefore be argued that mimicking of language, social learning, is inadequate as an explanation for language development, suggesting there is some credence to the theory that language development is an innate skill.

Nevertheless, it could also be argued though that if all children are born with the same ability to be able to use language, then they should all be using language at the same standard. Chomsky (1964) explained the differential by defining competence and performance as two separate elements; competence being the innate aspect that LAD prepares the child for and is innate and performance relating to how the language is used, once obtained. In other words, what a child knows is not always what they verbalise.

Contrasting theories to this nativist perspective exist and this chapter will now consider another standpoint; the environmental perspective.

### **2.2.2: Environmental perspective**

Variance in the ways children use their knowledge of language is an idea that may align with Skinner's theory (1957), that the ability to communicate is an environmental experience, a learned behaviour, and is developed by adults replicating sounds and reinforcing meanings in order that young children master the art of communication and expand their vocabulary. Skinner (1957) believed that children learn through positive reinforcement and communicate verbally in order to gain reward. However, most of Skinner's research was carried out on animals and some therefore argue that this may not always be transferable to the complex brain of the human (Hayes, 2016). Skinner (1957) also believed that social interaction was the sole manner in which language could be developed. This theory is reinforced when considering cases in which extreme neglect has occurred (Koluchova, 1972; Itard, 1962) and children show development only once they experience a level of interaction from those who already have the required skills. It could be argued therefore that Skinner's theory, that the ability to converse using language is a learned behaviour, holds some credence.

Moving on from the theories of Skinner and Chomsky, other scientific research has highlighted that brain development has a strong part to play in speech development. Kaan and Swaab (2002) claim that the left hemisphere of the brain is the most dominant in the finer points of speech, in ascertaining correct grammar for example, and this side of the brain becomes more dominant at around the age of 18 months old, around the time that children's speech tends to noticeably advance (Pinker, 1994). Historically the Broca region and the Wernicke region of the brain have been reported as being the crucial elements of the brain that are utilised when developing SL (Benson and Ardila, 1996), however Dronkers *et al.* (2004) claim that this is not just restricted to these specific areas. Where these studies reach consensus, however, is that it is the left hemisphere that is crucial for SLD. It could be argued therefore that an element of nativist development occurs within the left hemisphere.

There is evidence that a child cannot be taught to make their brain become more dominant on one side, rather than the other, and this tends to support Chomsky's theory, and gives credence to his theory regarding language acquisition device. It could be argued therefore that the biological factors of brain development have a crucial part to play in how children's SL develops.

### **2.2.3: Interactionism**

The different viewpoints discussed above indicate that a combination of theories explain language development; an aspect of the biological structure of the brain and the environmental perspective whereby interactions with the environment and those within it are equally crucial. The extant literature suggests that neither theory can be applied in isolation and that a combination of the two concepts is more feasible. Lenneberg (1967) argued that the development within this area was, indeed, a combination of the two. He argued that SL acquisition is an instinctively natural ability but cannot occur without guidance and example from experienced others. Bruner (1960) asserts that children are born with the natural ability to develop language, however he also recognises the need for social interaction. He argued that children are born with a Language Acquisition Support System (LASS) (Bruner, 1960); a need for caregivers to support language development through quality interactions and social involvement. Bruner therefore argues that it is likely that the LAD and the LASS need to work in harmony with each other. Tomasello (2003) develops this theory further and goes so far as to say that language acquisition is a social process but only once the innate development has occurred. This usage-based theory argues that children need to first have the ability to communicate and can only then apply the social knowledge of how to apply this language to situations, and expand the repertoire of grammar. Karmiloff-Smith (1992) acknowledges the need for the environment, and those within, to activate the areas of the brain that support language development.

In conclusion, it can be noted that in order for children to develop a competence in language development the most significant requirement is that they have interaction with the environment and also, they are exposed to social interaction. Furthermore, there exists a need to enhance the innate skills, which are present when the child is born. However, it is noted that this cannot happen without the element of interaction from others and from the environment. This highlights an increased importance that children are encouraged and nurtured from an early age, in order to maximise their development within this area. This perspective on language development has implications for how children within the early years are offered experiences (Macrory, 2010). This is the position that this research adopts and will therefore be reflected upon in greater depth and detail throughout this thesis.

What should also be considered is whether or not there is a critical period during which this language development occurs and this chapter will now explore this further.

### **2.3: The critical period of language development?**

It is believed by some (Lenneberg, 1967; Pinker, 1994) that there is a certain limited period within a child's development that the basics of language development can be mastered. As long ago as 1967, Lenneberg suggested that the skill of language has a critical period, within the earliest years, but, he suggested, most crucially before the age of 12 years old, or puberty. Lenneberg argues that if this window of opportunity is missed then it becomes almost impossible to master the basics of language development. Pinker (1994) agrees with the notion of a critical period and explains that it is likely to exist if the child has no use for the skill. If the area of the brain is not required to function then the brain's natural ability to prune the synapses that control language development will occur and the skill will therefore not be developed (MacBlain, 2014).



Singleton (1989) contradicts Lenneberg (1967) and states that he has discovered that it is possible to continue to show development in language skills after puberty, however the ability does decline not long after this time, suggesting that the critical period exists but declines as a gradual process rather than the sudden abrupt halt that Lenneberg alluded to. Saxton (2010:72) argues that what is more likely is that there is a gradual 'off-set in ability' and this is more likely to begin to occur at around the age of five years old. Neville and Bruer (2001) extend this even further by suggesting that some children are indeed susceptible to a critical period with regards to language development, however in contradiction, other children are not. Bruer (1999) calls this the sensitive period, rather than the critical period but whatever the case, it is recognised that some element of critical period is in existence and, although ethically the notion of a critical period for language development is hard to research and to prove, it is becoming increasingly recognised that the early years of a child's development are crucial to future outcomes (Hoff, 2013).

It is becoming increasingly documented that the early years are the critical times in which holistic development should be encouraged and nurtured (Tickell, 2011; Save the Children, 2016) and some go so far as to say that this encouragement should begin ante-natally (The 1001 Critical Days, 2015). It has been recognised that remedial attention can make improvements in later life, however recent neuro-science is demonstrating that as time goes by it becomes increasingly difficult to change the structure of the brain (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007). Shonkoff and Phillips (2000:383) emphasise the importance of a sensitive period and assert that 'compensating for missed opportunities, such as the failure to detect early difficulties or the lack of exposure to environments rich in language, often requires extensive intervention, if not heroic efforts, later in life.'

Having said all of this it should also be noted that it is not just the first years of a child's life that is important but, as Bruer (1999) argues, children should be encouraged to be lifelong learners and the encouragement to develop and learn should carry on throughout childhood.

## **2.4: Components of language development**

Having considered how and when language development may occur, this section will begin to explore different components of language development and will consider the importance of these for children within the early years. Phonology and vocabulary will be explored as these areas are those pertinent to the specific area of research: the quality of SL (Wells, 2009).

### **2.4.1: Phonology**

Hayes (2016:58) defines phonology as the way that 'sounds are stored and organised in the child's brain' and this also includes how that knowledge is then applied to their speech. It has been discovered that if children have poor phonological awareness at the age of three then they are more likely to struggle with lexical diversity and phonological application, which in turn can put them at greater risk of social and academic disadvantage (Paul and Jennings, 1992). Mani and Plunkett (2007:252) argue that an element of young children's 'phonetical repertoire' exists before children begin to acquire language. This goes some way to aligning with the theory that Chomsky (1957) advocates that language is an innate area of development and will occur within all children and recognises the fact that the brain is dealing with language development long before any speech sounds are made by children. Conversely, Bruner (1983) believes that the repertoire is greater if the child is exposed to richer and more varied vocabulary, within different environments.

### **2.4.2: Vocabulary**

Saxton (2010:8) reports that once a child has mastered their first word, then initially new words appear at 'a gentle rate' of around one word per week. Tamis-LeMonda *et al.* (2001) argue that when the repertoire reaches around 50 words, this rate of acquisition increases significantly and increases by one or two per day, with as many as ten new words a day being added to the child's repertoire (Clark, 1993). This means that by the time a child reaches the age of six this will result in a vocabulary of between 10,000 (Bloom and Markson, 1998) and 14,000 words (Clark, 1993). It could be argued however that this level of vocabulary can only be recognised if the child has the ability to verbalise these words and has the levels of speech required for such verbalisation. It is noted that within England there exists a problem with children's SLD, with many children being unable to articulate in an understandable manner (Finnegan and Warren, 2015). This could result in a child's vocabulary being difficult to measure. Lexical richness, or lexical diversity, is a term usually used to refer to the amount of vocabulary that an individual possesses (Jarvis, 2013) it is argued that lexical diversity can only be measured accurately if SL is at a standard that can be understood.

Although these components have been discussed as separate elements, Saxton (2010) suggests that looking at different components of language in isolation could perpetuate confusion; these components should not be seen as separate milestones in which the child has to achieve in a set order. Instead Saxton argues that these should be seen as interlinked and that simultaneous development should be seen as more typical. What should be noted as a common denominator throughout each of these elements however, is that the environment, and the interaction within that environment, appear to be necessary for development. Wells (2009:258) summarises this succinctly:

...(language development) is brought to bear on the particular language that is spoken in the child's community, using strategies that have much wider applicability in making sense of their physical and social environment.

## **2.5: International context on speech and language**

The following section will begin to discuss the situation regarding SLD both internationally, and nationally. This will place this literature review into context and begin to consider why this area of research has significance in England, and potentially, internationally.

### **2.5.1: Speech and language context around the world**

International evidence indicates that, on average, around 6% of children between the ages of two and five, have difficulty within the area of SLD (Law *et al.*, 2000; Marshall and Lewis, 2013). The data within this area however is particularly difficult to analyse; the prevalence that is reported differs vastly within each country and can have a 22% differential within the same country (Wren *et al.*, 2016). McLeod and Harrison (2009) reported that between 16 and 22% of children would be diagnosed with a speech difficulty in Australia if they were to undertake an assessment at the age of 5. Canadian children present with language impairments in 8.04% of the population (Beitchman *et al.*, 1986). Nigerian children have a prevalence of between 8 and 30% (Nwosu, 2015).

This issue of the differential in international prevalence figures may exist due to the extent to which SL difficulties are reported, what the definition of difficulty is, and the sampling processes that have been adopted (Wren *et al.*, 2016; Nwosu, 2015). These methodological issues can distort the situation, however they should not be disregarded. If 6% are reported to have a problem with SLD worldwide, this equates to 132 million children throughout the world (UNICEF, 2014) who have difficulties within this area.

### **2.5.2: The English context**

Finnegan and Warren (2015) report that 23% of children within England are not at the expected level of SL and this is noticeably higher for those children living in poverty. Within areas of deprivation, as many as 35% of children do not have the language skills expected of a five year old. Boys living in poverty fare worse within this area, with 42% of boys not meeting expected levels of language by the age of five, compared to 23% of girls living in poverty. However, these figures are national averages and there is great disparity between one area of England to another, with the North of the country faring worse than the South. This indicates that being in poverty is not an automatic pre-cursor to poor language skills and that by providing the correct support the children can be assisted.

It is pertinent to note the significant difference between the reported prevalence figures within England and the international figures discussed above. A danger of making international comparisons is that each country is assessing using a different assessment tool. It could be argued that the English system of assessment is striving for much higher outcomes and that reflects in the figures. That is an area that is beyond the realms of this research however it is a point to note when making comparisons in this way.

It is acknowledged however within England that difficulties with SL exist. These difficulties can then be an indicator of lower levels of academic achievement and children's life chances can be impacted upon by this area of development (Roulstone *et al.*, 2010). It is recognised that the children who display difficulties with SL at the age of five are one-and-a-half times more likely to be suffering with mental health issues at the age of 34 (Law *et al.*, 2010), and one third of these children's mental health issues will be severe enough to require medical treatment in later life (Clegg *et al.*, 2005). These same children also have reduced chances of employability, being twice as likely to be unemployed than their peers with normal language development (Law *et al.*, 2010).

### **2.5.3: English government policy**

The importance of supporting SLD throughout early childhood is therefore recognised by the government in England (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008b). In fact, Freeman and Hartshorne (2009) went so far as to say that it had never been as prominent on the English political agenda as it was in 2009. The Bercow Review of Services for Children and Young People with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (Bercow, 2008) was the driving force behind government initiatives (Roulstone *et al.*, 2010). Bercow's report led to the establishment of the Communication Trust, the Communication Council and the 2011 Year of Speech Language and Communication Needs; all established with the ultimate purpose of improving SL outcomes for children. Subsequently, the revised Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (Department for Education, 2017) recognised the crucial role of language and communication in children's learning and future attainment, naming it as a prime area of development. With a reported increase in attention it could be argued that this should be an area therefore that has seen dramatic improvements over recent times. Although it is noted that the government is keen to improve this area (The Communication Trust, 2016), a review into the Bercow report (2008) undertaken after ten years (Bercow 10 Years On, 2018), indicates that a national problem continues to exist and, disappointingly, there remains a lack of awareness regarding the crucial nature of SL within England.

### **2.5.4: Early years provision for speech and language development within England**

Much research has recently been undertaken, on behalf of the government, into early intervention (Allen, 2011; Field, 2010) and quality of early years provision (Nutbrown, 2012; Tickell, 2011), and all acknowledge the importance for early years practitioners to be highly trained and be aware of the need for encouragement within the area of SLD. It is recognised that special educational needs and disability (SEND) intervention needs to occur as early as possible. This is particularly pertinent in this study since SL issues are more common than any other SEND within England, and the number of children presenting with such

needs within primary school has increased by over 11% since 2012 (Department for Education, 2017). The significant evidence from research (Bercow, 2008; Allen, 2011; Field, 2010) highlights that SLD needs to be of prime concern to all early years professionals within the early years sector. The Centre for Social Justice states that within England, SL difficulties should be regarded as 'the number one public health challenge for the twenty-first century' (2011:19) however Gross (2012) still uses the term 'postcode lottery' (2012:11) to describe national services in England; meaning that support levels can vary vastly depending on where a child lives, and recommends improved collaborative working as a means to making improvements within this area.

It is argued that early years practitioners in England are ideally placed to make a difference in children's lives and improve outcomes, particularly for those who are most in need for this support. The United Kingdom (UK) government proposal that children begin to receive free childcare from the age of two if meeting criteria; particularly aimed at those children living in poverty (Gov., 2015), gives practitioners an even greater opportunity to support development. It should not be a case however, of waiting for government intervention or guidance on how to assist these children. By waiting for top-down instruction there will be many children who are not receiving the levels of assistance that they require in the interim. It is the responsibility of early years practitioners to do their utmost to give every child a chance. SL has been acknowledged as pivotal to young children's future life chances and it is therefore crucial that professional practice reflects this and gives specific attention to the required areas. Some areas of the country have implemented specific initiatives whereby child care provision and speech and language therapists (SLTs) work in collaboration but again this is very much dependant on where in the country children are situated (Gross, 2012:11) and is not a consistent service nationally. Neaum (2012:49) states that 'the greater our ability with language the better equipped we are to engage in learning across all aspects of our lives' and this is what needs to be at the forefront of all practice. It could be argued that the present government is beginning to recognise this need, with the current drive to

increase the qualification level of the workforce (Department for Education, 2014c). It has been noted that the quality of the workforce does make a difference on the SL outcomes of young children (Maisey *et al.*, 2013) and the better qualified the practitioners, the better the EYFS outcomes. However, it could equally be argued that, although this is a positive step towards improvement, the qualifications of the workforce are not sufficient in themselves to tackle the area of complexity such as SLD.

A consideration for SLD, as discussed earlier, is the environment in which children play and learn. This will be explored in greater detail in the next section of this literature review.

## **2.6: Trends for play and learning environments**

Current practice in England within early years focuses on children learning through play and there exists much research to highlight the benefits of such practice (Bredekamp and Copple, 2002; Trevarthen and Aitken, 2001). Marshall and Lewis (2013) report that play is crucial for a child's communication and collaboration skills. Based on the evidence presented above for the need for intervention with SLD (Bercow, 2008), it could be assumed that allowing children to learn through play would be strongly encouraged throughout settings in England. However, on analysis of the current English curriculum guidance for the early years, it is noted that the word play appears nine times in statutory guidelines (Department for Education, 2017) compared to the word learning, which appears 54 times. There is a current political shift which appears to be drifting away from the recognition of the importance of play, and much more emphasis on learning and "school readiness". In this vein, McDowall Clark (2017) asserts that the focus for early years provision is becoming more focussed on preparing children for formal schooling. Whitebread and Bingham (2011) report how the model of school readiness is deemed to be attractive to government as this allegedly makes a child's transition to primary school easier for all concerned and, as a consequence, produces results that can be assessed in a quicker manner. However, it should be



argued that the concept of being school ready is not necessarily beneficial to the crucial area of language development.

Although school readiness is a term that is widely used within England, it has been discovered that no standard definition is applied (PACEY, 2013) and there exists a stark difference in the way that the term is viewed by early childhood practitioners compared by that of policy makers and regulators (McDowall Clark, 2017). Although there exists no nationally agreed definition of school readiness (Ofsted, 2014), PACEY (2013) discovered that 97% of early years practitioners agreed that the definition should include the need to have strong social skills, to separate from parents appropriately, to be fairly independent with regards to personal care and have a curiosity that encourages a desire to learn. However, language, and the ability to communicate, was not highlighted by these practitioners as a necessary skill for starting school. It could be argued that as the government are not giving this the attention and focus that this area of development needs, then this could be impacting upon the emphasis that practitioners give language development. It is crucial that this be an area for attention. It has been shown how important this area of development is for future life chances and yet practitioners are still not reporting this to be considered a required skill for starting school.

Honeyford and Boyd (2015) recognise the significant role that play has on language development and state concern regarding the fact that learning through play diminishes after early childhood education. As can be seen from this discussion, the emphasis on play is appearing not just to diminish *after* early years education, but also throughout it. It is therefore of value to explore whether environments reflect this shift in policy and practice, and how this impacts upon different children.

## **2.7: Different environments suit different children**

Bronfenbrenner (1979) recognised the importance of environment for children's development and it has subsequently been acknowledged that young children's development differs dependant on the environment

within which they are situated (Hughes, 2010). This can also be said for SLD (Neaum, 2012). It has been established that both the environment and the interactions that occur within that environment are crucial elements that impact upon a child's development (Sutterby and Frost, 2006; Bruce, 2004). Marshall and Lewis (2013) report that modifications to the communication environment, such as changes to the people and objects around the child, can be utilised as intervention for SLD however, additionally Marshall *et al.* (2007:288) state that 'advice about altering the child's environment should be given with care.' This is due to the fact that there still remains a great deal of uncertainty with regards to what constitutes a communication appropriate environment (Marshall and Lewis, 2013).

This research compared three different learning environments; ICs, outdoor play environments and NEs/FSs. These environments, and their link to SLD will now be explored further.

### **2.7.1: Indoor classroom environments**

ICs, those which provide 'instructive learning environments and routines' (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2002:12), are reportedly likely to have more pre-determined goals for learning and greater emphasis on outcomes than the outdoor environment (MacBlain, 2014). However, it has been found that physical elements of a classroom environment can be shown to adversely impact on practitioners and children. Particularly, sub-standard temperature control, quality of lighting and air and sound levels have been shown to have adverse effects on levels of concentration, overall well-being, attendance and, ultimately, educational achievement (Higgins *et al.*, 2005). Levey (2011:13) states that 'the most important aspect of language and the classroom is that language needs to be related to the environment.' It is acknowledged that classrooms, or nursery playrooms, are a crucial element of a child's education and development, however learning outside of the classroom is seen to be increasingly important and

beneficial to a child's outcomes (Department for Education and Skills, 2006).

It is recognised that early years practitioners in England show a great commitment to assisting SLD within early years settings, and it is acknowledged that self-evaluation occurs within many settings, with practitioners often aiming for communication rich environments (Halden *et al.*, 2011). The EYFS statutory guidelines (Department for Education (DfE), 2017) provide guidance on what should be provided within an IC environment as follows:

Communication and language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.

(DfE, 2017:8)

Although there exists this requirement to provide a rich language environment, paradoxically the DfE do not extend this guidance by offering ideas on how this rich language environment should be created, instead leaving it to the experience and expertise of the practitioners. In contrast to this, Australia's early years framework entitled 'Belonging, being and becoming' (Department of Education and Training, 2009:1) gives many examples of how children can achieve the outcome within their curriculum of children being 'effective communicators' (Department of Education and Training, 2009:8). Examples given include provocations such as providing a literacy rich environment, ensuring that there are symbols and patterns in the environment and having an environment that reflects the family's culture. The Australian government state that:

Environments that support learning are vibrant and flexible spaces that are responsive to the interests and abilities of each child.

(Department of Education and Training, 2009:15)

It could be argued that the Australian government deem it necessary to provide more detailed guidelines due to the fact that this curriculum is the

first of its kind in Australia, with no early years curriculum being in place until the last few years. Within England an early years curriculum has existed for many years and this could therefore be the reason that the statutory guidance is less detailed and more focussed on compliance rather than practice enhancement. Whatever the reason though, it should be noted that classrooms play a large part in children's learning and should therefore be established in a way that will enhance and encourage children's communication (Brebner *et al.*, 2016).

### **2.7.2: Outdoor classroom environments**

OCs within England have tended to become an extension of the indoor learning environment (Isaacs, 2012). The OC tends to replicate the type of learning experiences that are provided within the IC and are planned and managed as such (Isaacs, 2012). The indoor and OCs are often operated on a free-flow basis, meaning children can move freely from one environment to the other as they choose. McArdle *et al.* (2013:243) suggest that 'open-ended play and an open environment (are) interlinked' and it could be argued that this is the case for indoor and OCs as they tend to be linked both in a physical sense but also in a way that links experiences and learning intentions. Nelson (2012) argues however, in contrast to this, that what is learnt outdoors should differ from that which is learnt in an indoor environment. White (2014:4) agrees and states that the outdoors should be significantly different to the indoor environment and that 'we retain the characteristics that make the outdoors different and special for children'.

Sweden, a country that has a deep-rooted tradition of outdoor learning, 'encourages activities in outdoor environments at the ECEC setting and in nature' (Taguma *et al.*, 2013:32). In comparison, in England it is acknowledged that access to an outdoor environment is necessary for children (Waller, 2008; Fjørtoft, 2004) and as such outdoor play is a compulsory element of early years education. It is stated, in the EYFS Statutory Guidance (Department for Education, 2017) that access to the

outdoors should be occurring on a daily basis, although poignantly, there are no guidelines as to what the purpose of this outdoor activity should be and whether this outdoor space should be adequate. Davy (2016) reports that 85% of practitioners within the UK feel that the outdoor space that they have on offer to children is inadequate and not suited to their developmental needs. The need for children to access outdoor environments has been recently reinforced, with influential professionals calling for the statutory guidance to be adjusted to ensure that adequate outside space is available (BERA/TACTYC, 2014). Davy (2016) acknowledges that practitioners within the UK are aware of the importance of outdoor play, however this is not reflected in the provision that is available.

When accessing literature regarding the benefits of outdoor play, there exists a plethora of evidence that documents the benefits being improvements on physical development (BERA/TACTYC, 2014; Fjørtoft, 2004), creativity (Knight, 2011; Sutterby and Frost, 2006) and social development (Waite and Pratt, 2013). Calls to review guidance also tend to focus on the main benefit of the outdoors being that of physical play (BERA/TACTYC, 2014). In response to this research, schools in England provide space in addition to the OC in which children can utilise gross motor skills; running, skipping, jumping, such as a playground or school field. These areas are generally accessed during break times or for physical education. Break times give children chance to “let off steam” and generally have no learning intentions or structured provision of experience, invariably with no resources even provided it is solely an opportunity for children to have a break from learning. Spencer (1895) alleges that play of this nature is driven by the need to expend excess energy and this excess energy is what children are encouraged to utilise within playground type environments. Although it is not disputed that children should be given access to the outdoors, it is poignant to note that although much emphasis is placed on physical benefits, Storli and Hagen (2010) assert that children display no difference in the levels of physical exertion whether they are situated in a manufactured playground, or a NE. Much marketing exists in order to sell the benefits of outdoor

playground equipment and resources to promote physical development (British Heart Foundation, 2015), however Storli and Hagen (2010) indicate that equipment is not necessarily the key to the levels of activity. What could be argued with regards to this, is that children use different physical skills within different environments and with different resources available to them. This is beyond the scope of this study and will not be discussed further here, suffice to say that although physical benefits of these environments are heralded as important (BERA/TACTYC, 2014; Fjørtoft, 2004) there may be other benefits also which are not researched in as great a detail and may need exploring further.

A playground environment; traditionally a large area of concreted space, again tends to benefit children beyond the expected physical development. The equipment provided within a playground provides an interesting contrast of benefits for children (Hughes, 2010). It has been found that new style playgrounds, that schools in England have begun to install within their grounds for lunchtime and break-time play, tend to include structures for climbing and crawling through. It could be argued that these installations are as a result of research that indicates that in order for children to be effective learners they need to be able to control their gross motor functions (Goddard Blythe, 2000). Goddard Blythe (2000) acknowledges the importance of physical development on cognitive development and asserts that it is therefore necessary to provide children with opportunities to challenge themselves in order to assist learning. Saying that playgrounds are essential for encouraging physical development, it is worth noting that, when researched, playgrounds were found to instigate a wide range of activities (Hughes, 2010), not just those relating to physical development. It was discovered that more than half of play experiences around this kind of playground equipment were focused on social interaction and around one quarter of play experiences were role-play based (Boyatzis, 1987). It could be argued therefore that this type of play equipment brings children together, in a social situation, and as a result enhances language development in an indirect manner. Waite and Pratt (2013:3) concur that

'particular spaces are suitable for different kinds of learning because of the functions and activities that they support' and although this may be so, language development is one area where further investigation is required.

Based on the extensive research that exists to illustrate that outdoor learning benefits a child's overall development (Rickinson *et al.*, 2004; Malone, 2008), paradoxically there exists no directive from English government that children should have outdoor learning incorporated into their curriculum; only that they have daily access to the outdoors (Department for Education, 2017). In comparison, as discussed already, Sweden 'encourage' outdoor play (Taguma *et al.*, 2013:32) and practitioners in Norway, another European country who have a tradition of outdoor play, are told that they *must* 'include outdoor activities and play in the daily routine of the kindergarten' (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2016). It does not appear, therefore, that the wording of the curriculum is overly important, but it could be argued that it is the culture and pedagogy that becomes more relevant to how entrenched outdoor play is in everyday practice. This could benefit from greater analysis and although this project may begin to consider this as a small aspect of the overall research, it is likely that full analysis of this is beyond the realms of this project at this time.

### **2.7.3: Natural environments and forest schools as learning spaces**

FSs have become an increasingly popular addition to early years settings throughout the UK, after being introduced to the country from Sweden in the 1960s (Slade *et al.*, 2013). Wellings (2012:9) defines a FS as 'a natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world'. Waite *et al.* (2016) argue that the FS concept should reflect cultural and pedagogical landscapes however and it therefore remains appropriate that the English version of this provision be different from that provided in other countries, with Waite *et al.* stating that comparing different approaches could be likened to 'comparing apples and pears' (Waite *et al.*, 2016:884). This also

means that Wellings' definition, as stated above, may require some refinement. If reflecting cultural and pedagogical landscapes, as Waite *et al.* (2006) claim there is a need for, then it could be argued that the need for 'a natural *wooded* environment' is not crucial, more so the exposure to the NE is that which is essential.

FSs have continued to build on the pioneering work of Macmillan (1919) who highlighted the importance of natural outdoor play for children to be able to improve developmentally and improve overall health and well-being. Pretty *et al.* (2009) allege that, in addition to the well documented physical benefits, the advantages of NEs are that children can develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of their environment, develop socially and enhance behaviour strategies. It is also widely documented that self-esteem levels are enhanced by having access to a NE (Pretty *et al.*, 2009; Swarbrick *et al.* 2004; Richardson, 2014). Although it could be argued that each of these areas of development are intrinsically linked to SLD, there exists very little impartial research to document how SLD is enhanced, or not enhanced, in outdoor and NEs (Richardson and Murray, 2016). Staempfli (2009) discusses outdoor play and recognises how this can enhance creativity, imagination and social skills and it could be argued that these benefits could be applied equally to SLD. It is widely accepted that social development impacts upon language development (Marshall and Lewis, 2013) and it is therefore argued that although there exists very little research about SLD within a NE directly, tenuous links can be made.

Acknowledging that children's development can be enhanced when playing within a NE, it is discouraging to note that children's outdoor play opportunities have diminished over the last three generations as a result of increased and faster traffic, greater institutionalisation of childhood (out of school clubs etc) and the increased concerns that parents report regarding their children's safety and parental attitudes to risk (Waller, 2009). Hunt *et al.* (2016) report that 12% of all children within England



(c1.3 million) state that they had not visited a NE in the preceding 12 months. Of the 88% who had visited a NE, only 43% of these reported that they went to play, with other reasons given including getting fresh air, being physically active and relaxing. Hunt *et al.* continue to report that 22% of the children surveyed attended a NE without adults present and 5% of children visited alone (2016). Waller (2009) reports that NEs are a crucial way to provide space to enhance social interactions, alongside a sense of belonging being nurtured. It is argued therefore, that for these social interactions to be enhanced, and therefore language to be developed, that it is necessary for others to be present when the children are within the NE.

When assessing how frequently children from England access natural play spaces Hunt *et al.* (2016) state that children from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds are less likely to frequently visit the NE (56%) when compared to children from non-BAME backgrounds (74%). There was also a significant difference in access rates based on socio-economic status, with children from higher income backgrounds being more frequent visitors to natural spaces (77%), compared to children from lower income backgrounds (65%) (Hunt *et al.*, 2016). It is worth noting that access to natural spaces in England do not generally incur a cost and it is argued therefore that children of all backgrounds should have the opportunity to access such environments.

Although much reflection occurs within early years settings on how to develop communication rich environments (Halden *et al.*, 2011), these areas of reflection, paradoxically, do not tend to concentrate on the outdoor environments. These reflections are alternatively focussing on areas such as mark making, or role-play areas. This appears to be reflecting current thinking as restricted amounts of previous research seem to be available on the impact of the NE on SLD. Few research articles do exist that specifically discuss benefits on SLD (O'Brien and Murray, 2006; Natural England, 2009) however these articles tend to have been commissioned and written by organisations with a financial interest

in the concept of natural play and although not disputing that this is a worthwhile point of reference, it is worth considering how impartial this is due to the fact that the organisations market the concept of FSs and sell packages related to this as a money making scheme. In addition to this Passy and Waite (2013:173) believe that much research in the domain of the outdoors is undertaken by 'enthusiasts' and issues that this raises around subjectivity therefore have to be considered.

As a consequence of outdoor environments having fewer rules and boundaries, it could be argued that children will have a greater element of autonomy and freedom, which could lead to a greater level of engagement with language. Sutterby and Frost (2006) acknowledge that when children play in an outdoor environment, compared with indoors, their play is messier, louder, less likely to be influenced by an adult, and as such leads to a deeper level of experimentation and exploration.

Gascoyne asserts that engaging in messy play can provide children with a 'conduit to communication' (2017:272). White (2008:2) states that being in the outdoors gives children space to be 'their natural exuberant, physical and noisy selves'. Horton and Kraftl (2018) report that children's play has, over time, become more limited by the restrictions of space. It could be argued therefore that access to space, and the freedom from adult intervention, could be beneficial to language development. It is recognised that some children can feel restricted (Neaum, 2012) by the close supervision of adults. This can result in them feeling pressurised into responding to questions in the correct manner and consequently it may be reasonable to assume that the greater independence and freedom within the outdoors could result in children flourishing.

## **2.8: What impacts upon a child's language?**

It has already been acknowledged throughout this chapter that language development is somewhat an inborn trait, but is enhanced and developed with interaction from other individuals. It is also recognised that other

factors can influence how a child's SL develops and this will now be discussed further.

### **2.8.1: Holistic development**

It is now known that physical movement and the use of voice are neurologically linked (McGilchrist, 2009) and children are more likely to use their own voice if being active. It could be argued that increased physicality results in the ability to gesture and to point, to move around more and enable access to points of significant interest. This, it is argued, can increase the potential for the extension of vocabulary and therefore enhance language development (Campos *et al.*, 2000). Piaget and Inhelder (1969) asserted that in order for a child to be able to expand language, they first need to be able to locate themselves in their environment and realise that they exist with other people and objects. This relates to a child's sense of self and therefore falls into the domain of social development. If physical activity is crucial to language development and social interaction is also as important then it could therefore be argued that if a child is disadvantaged in one of these areas their language development could also be affected. Bedford *et al.* (2015) have indeed found some correlation within this area, acknowledging that reduced motor functions appeared to impact upon the development of language.

Fig.2.1 shows language at the centre of holistic development, and it is theorised that language is indeed pivotal to other aspects of a child's development, and the other aspects of development impact, in turn, on the language development of a child. This provides more credence to the argument earlier within this chapter that an environment, and the activity that is undertaken in such an environment in a holistic fashion, can impact upon children's SLD.

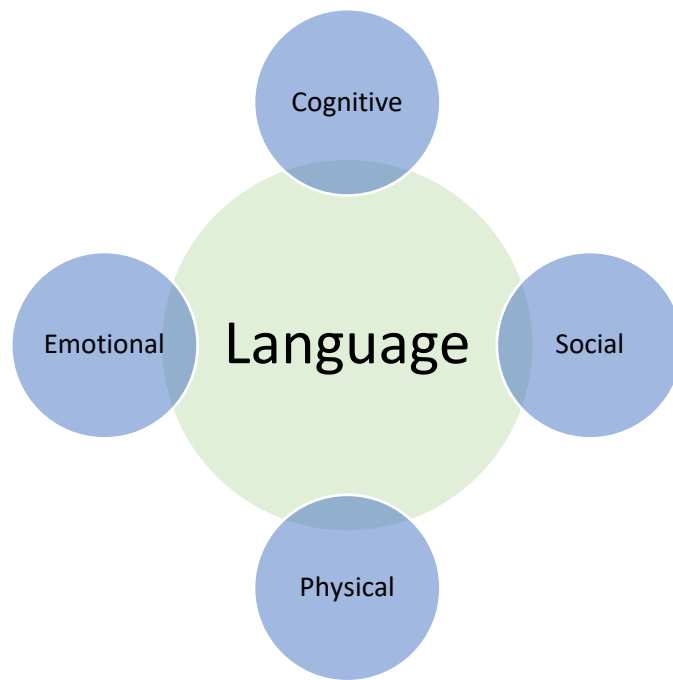


Fig.2.1: The holistic nature of language development (Richardson, 2019a:86)

### **2.8.2: Socio-economic status and familial impact**

There also exists extensive research which illustrates the significant impact on SLD that occurs due to the economic and social factors within which a child is brought up (Hart and Risley, 1995; Gross, 2012; Sosu and Ellis, 2014; Marshall and Lewis, 2013; Gilkerson *et al.*, 2018), with a child in a professional home environment hearing 11 million words a year, in contrast to a child in a family reliant on the state, who would hear just three million words per year (Hart and Risley, 1995). Gross (2012) concurs with Hart and Risley and report that children from areas of social deprivation are beginning school life with poorer language abilities (Gross, 2012), and Sosu and Ellis (2014) report that children from a lower socio-economic background have a 13-month gap in vocabulary by the time they reach the age of five. Hart and Risley (1995) and Sosu and Ellis (2014) go some way to agreeing with interactionist theories (Bruner, 1983) that argue that children require social interaction alongside the innate skills that they possess to fully enhance their SL capabilities.

As a response to this, practitioners within England show an awareness of the importance of SLD for disadvantaged children with Ofsted (2015) finding that this was reported to be the main area of focus for those children in receipt of two-year funding; extra support offered by the English government for the two-year olds in disadvantage. Ofsted report that 'every interaction (is used) as an opportunity to develop children's speech, language and vocabulary' (2015:11). It could be argued however that it is not solely interaction with individuals that is required in order to stimulate language development, but also interaction with the material environment.

Marshall and Lewis (2013) assert that the family home has a big influence on SLD; the material environment, as well as what happens therein. Participants in Marshall and Lewis's study reported that the home's physical environment was crucial to language development, with regards to 'space, cleanliness, sound (including TV), activities available to the child, toys/play and resources available outside of the home' (2013:347). The rate of language development also has a strong correlation to levels of maternal responsiveness (Tamis-LeMonda *et al.*, 2001). It was found that the level of maternal responsiveness to a child at 13 months old was a reliable prediction of children's development of expressive language, the syntactic development and the ability to recall past events in the correct context. Gilkerson *et al.* (2018) concur and report that the turn-taking throughout conversations between children aged 18-24 months and parents show a high correlation with language skills demonstrated in later life and cognitive abilities. This indicates that although research (Hart and Risley, 1995; Sosu and Ellis, 2014) establishes that the socio-economic status of parents is a determinant of SLD, the interaction between the parent and child is also of importance when considering language acquisition (Tamis-LeMonda *et al.*, 2001; Gilkerson *et al.*, 2018). Trevarthen (2009) expresses the importance of sharing meaning with a significant person. He states 'the feeling of 'being somebody', leads to confidence in cultural skills, including language' (2009:2). This gives further credibility to the importance of social interaction, and the material environment, on the development within this area.

### **2.8.3: Socio-cultural factors**

England is fast becoming a digital nation, with children today being referred to as 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2001:1) and children having access to technology from a very young age. Prensky goes on to assert that digital natives are at a disadvantage in the current culture as they are being taught by 'digital immigrants'; those not comfortable with the technology (2001:1). Helsper and Enyon (2009) fiercely argue against this, reporting that the bridge between the 'native' and the 'immigrant' is not impassable and the change in culture is a gradual process that is perfectly manageable. It is argued therefore that what remains crucial is that social interaction remains. This is reinforced by Kuhl *et al.* (2003) who report on a study that was undertaken on two groups of nine-month old babies who were being taught Mandarin as a second language. One group of babies were taught face-to-face and the other group of babies were taught by the use of a DVD. Results found that the children who were exposed to the DVD did not learn to recognise the language, compared to those who received human interaction who retained the knowledge and appeared to enjoy the experience more. In agreement with this concept, Courage and Howe (2010) report that television viewing in young children can be detrimental to language development as this reduces parent-child interactions. Social interaction is therefore seen to be of paramount importance when learning to use language (Kuhl *et al.*, 2003; Courage and Howe, 2010).

In addition to access to televisions and DVD materials, young children are increasingly being able to access mobile media devices. Ofcom (2017) report that, within the UK, 21% of 3 – 4 year olds own their own tablet, and 53% of children within this age group are spending 8 hours a week online. It is recognised that there can be benefits to the access of these devices, such as the promotion of early literacy skills through the use of specific educational applications (Chiong and Shuler, 2010), however contradictorily Heuvel *et al.* (2018) allege that there is a significant correlation between the use of mobile devices and expressive speech delay in young children, as reported by parents. These studies indicate that there is no definitive response as to whether digital devices are

beneficial to language development, with Lavigne *et al.* (2017) going so far as to say that this is within the top ten of unanswered research questions with regards to preventative child health.

Although digital devices are becoming increasingly popular within England it has been found that children still access literature, with 99.7% of young children reportedly having books in their homes, and with children having an average of 89 books within the home environment (Formby, 2014). It is known that adults and children having shared access to books has a significant impact on a child's speech development (Doyle and Bramwell, 2006; Krishnan and Johnson, 2014) so it is therefore argued that it is important not to just have access to the literature but also that there be an element of social interaction alongside the books. Formby (2014) report that 72.9% of children have access to a touch screen device and although children of a lower socioeconomic status are less likely to have a touch screen device (63.3% compared to 72.9%), those who do have a device are twice as likely to look at books on it than their peers. Building on the research that was discussed earlier, that children from a lower socio-economic class tend to have lower language abilities (Hart and Risley, 1995), this may go some way to explaining this and it continues to reinforce the point that social interactions are crucial to language development.

Another cultural aspect which one could argue influences language development is the prevalence of music within a society. Within England music lessons are slowly being removed from the curriculum as the focus moves further toward the academic subjects (Roberts, 2016). Hallam (2017) argues that music is crucial to developing the neural pathways which assist language development and therefore the lack of music within an environment could adversely affect young children's SL.

#### **2.8.4: Rural upbringing versus urban environments**

Smidt (2013) considers that to learn to use language competently means that children have to learn how to interact with others in particular social situations or contexts. She argues that children's dialogue can only

successfully be composed where the social interactions that children are exposed to meet their inner meanings and the cultural symbols that have been made previously available to them. This concurs with the suggestion that the environment, and the experiences that are offered and undertaken within that environment, will be a stimulus to how children develop and implement SL skills. It could therefore be argued that children who are exposed to a greater variety of experiences and environments from a young age will have a wider vocabulary and a greater desire to communicate. Ferguson *et al.* (2013) recognise that the physical environment that children experience has an impact on their cognitive and their socioemotional development, and this impact lasts their whole life. Research from Cameron-Faulkner *et al.* (2018) goes so far as to say that when children and parents spend time in NEs, this has a positive effect on SL, thus showing the impact of the environment in which interactions take place. Conversely, the adverse factors of an environment; pollution, noise levels, crowding, housing issues, are shown to have significant negative effects on a child's development and wellbeing (Evans and Kim, 2013) and it could therefore be argued that the home environment and the situation of any day-care provision can be a pertinent factor when considering how children's SL is developing.

Hunt *et al.* (2016) discovered that children living in an urban environment, in London, were least likely to play in NEs and even less likely to do so alone, without adult supervision. Whereas children in rural areas accessed the NE more frequently and more independently. This is perhaps unsurprising and may be reflected in how children develop when living in different environments and have exposure to different kinds of activities. In addition to this, Evans *et al.* (2012) have reported on the phenomena that children from poorer households are more likely to have higher body mass index (BMI). Evans *et al.* discovered that children from households with greater wealth had a greater chance of accessing green open spaces and therefore had more physical activity. This increased physical activity had the obvious result of lowering children's BMI. Considering the points that were raised earlier on in this chapter, that the



more physical activity a child does, the better the language development (McGilchrist, 2009; Campos et al., 2000), this would then follow that children in more affluent households, and living in rural areas, also have better chances of improved language development.

### **2.8.5: Quality of educational provision**

The concept of quality within an educational environment is highly contested and will be explored in much greater depth and detail in the following chapter. It should be noted however within this chapter that the higher the quality of an educational environment then the greater the impact on young children's overall development (Melhuish *et al.*, 2008; Sylva *et al.*, 2004) and, more importantly for this project, on SLD (Tizard *et al.*, 1972; McCartney, 1984). McCartney (1984) went so far as to explore the impact of child/practitioner interaction and found that children's language development was enhanced the most when children were in groups that were led by adults. Although the results of McCartney's research are not generalisable, due to the fact that the sample size was restrictive and the data did not take into account other factors that could impact upon the child's development (such as parental involvement and family history), it is worthy of note that McCartney states that the quality of the caregiver is more of a crucial factor than the quality of the environment itself. Spilt *et al.* (2015) explore this concept further and argue that the quality of the relationship that a child has with an educator has an impact on language development; the better the relationship the more likely the child is to talk to the educator and therefore this can result in an improvement to SL outcomes. It could be argued therefore the quality of a play and learning environment is so much more than the tangible and this will be explored in much greater depth in the following chapter.

Conversely to the research that asserts that adult's interactions are crucial to language development (McCartney, 1984; Spilt *et al.*, 2015), Hanscom (2016) believes that children benefit more when left to play alone or with

their peers, rather than being controlled by adults in order to achieve pre-determined learning outcomes. Fillmore and Snow (2002) argues that if the content of learning and play is well planned and designed then the language development will take care of itself. They suggest that rich topic content produces rich language. This therefore builds on the thoughts of Hanscom and asserts that leaving children to play alone can be enhanced by careful planning and provocation. Adult involvement is still present within this scenario though, highlighting the need for an element of interaction, albeit not necessary direct interaction. It should also be questioned as to whether *every* child would benefit from the adults stepping back in this way. This is something that required greater investigation and further exploration as the project progressed.

## **2.9: Conclusion**

This chapter set out to explore key theories concerning language development, and as result of this literature review it is argued that SLD is acquired both innately and through social interaction. Interactionism was therefore the theoretical foundation that was adopted for this project: the belief that children are born with the biological ability to develop language however social interaction is needed in addition to this to enhance the innate ability. It has been highlighted that not only is the prevalence of SL problems an issue within England but also it is an international problem and therefore it is crucial that this research is undertaken to establish ways of assisting within this area.

The realisation has also been made that the environment plays a crucial part in this development and the aim was that knowledge was built upon as the research progressed. An aspect of this research aimed to compare and contrast different play and learning environments within England's early years settings and aimed to determine which kind of environment is more conducive to the promotion of language development; specifically focussing on IC environments, outdoor play environments and NEs, namely FSs. This literature review has begun to explore the aspects of each of these environments and consider how they may impact on SLD and this requires further investigation. This literature has highlighted the

importance of early interaction, both socially and environmentally. It has been recognised that children's SLD can benefit from early intervention and that critical periods may exist for this to happen. This gives credence to this research project and the importance of investigating the impact of environment on early language development.

This study considered the impact that a learning environment has on a child's language development and it is therefore crucial that the quality of the environment and what happens in said environment are taken into account. The literature regarding the quality of learning and play environments will be explored in depth in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Literature review 2: The question of quality of early childhood learning environments**

#### **3.1: Introduction**

It could be argued that the concept of quality is subjective (Reed, 2012; Dahlberg *et al.*, 2013; Pence and Moss, 1994). What is classed as quality is dependent on individual views and opinions and there is on-going debate as to what constitutes quality within an early childhood environment (OECD, 2015).

This chapter considers the literature that surrounds this debate both nationally and internationally. It addresses the concept of quality and looks at how this relates to the environment, and to the area of SLD. Based on the review of literature in this chapter, it is argued that, although the concept of quality is contentious and open to interpretation, it is necessary for the purposes of this research, to define what constitutes a high-quality early years play and learning environment and that it is therefore possible – and may be desirable – to devise a framework that relates specifically to SLD and the impact of different environments on this area of development.

The literature that has been cited in this chapter has been accessed by using the University of Northampton's library search engines and via the databases EBSCO Host Database and Education Research Complete. Keywords and phrases used were: quality of early years/early childhood, quality of environments, Ofsted inspections, perceptions of quality, international quality frameworks, quality rating scales. The initial search focus was undertaken by commencing in the year 2000 and those articles that discussed the quality of environments particularly were those that received focus.

### **3.2: Key terms used within this chapter**

Throughout this chapter the concept of *high, or good, quality* is explored. Slaughter and Carmichael (2016) assert that these are phrases that are regularly used within the context of early childhood without definition or consideration, due to the general agreement that high-quality should be aimed for without argument. A definition *is* required however, to ensure clarity throughout this study.

Before the concept of quality can be addressed further it is first essential to define quality. This is problematic because it has been widely documented that quality, meaning *good, or high, quality*, is an undefinable concept. Pence and Moss state that:

Quality in early childhood services is a constructed concept, subjective in nature and based on values, beliefs and interest, rather than an objective and universal reality. Quality child care is, to a large extent, in the eye of the beholder.

(Pence and Moss, 1994:172)

Moss and Penn (2003:8) assert that quality is primarily about 'a service that can achieve its objectives' and in the instance of this study those objectives are to assist young children with their SLD. Gosling (2016:31) suggests that what is constituted as a HQE will depend on 'an intricate web of interconnected beliefs and experiences' and what an individual views as a quality environment will be dependent on personal views of childhood.

Although there is much debate over definitions of quality, it was necessary that I adopt a definition for the basis of this study. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations, 1989) provides four basic principles that:

- Children have a right not to be discriminated against
- The best interests of the child should be the main consideration
- Children have the right to survival and development
- Children have a right to have their views and opinions heard

However, a *high*-quality provision, for the purposes of the discussions within this chapter, and therefore this study, is that which is deemed to produce ‘*significant*’ benefits to the children who access the provision (Rentzou, 2017:667). *Low-quality* provision, as the inverse, is therefore defined, as that which may have little or no benefits to the children who are in attendance and do not meet the basic UNCRC principles listed above. This definition of low-quality adopts the principle that low-quality provision provides no value to children in the long term (Fontaine *et al.*, 2006; Rosenthal, 2003). This will be discussed further as this chapter progresses.

Although the terms high-quality and low-quality have been defined for the purposes of this research, it is recognised that this concept of quality can be subjective and based on an individual’s perspective (Gosling, 2016; Pence and Moss, 1994). It was important for me, in this study, to obtain a range of perspectives to gain a view of quality that included views of those affected by the concept. This ‘perspectives’ approach to quality will now be considered further.

### **3.3: Perspectives of quality**

Brownlee and Berthelsen (2006) state that an environment will reflect the practitioner’s understanding of child development theory and the quality will be influenced as a result of these beliefs. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2015) advocates the need for a HQE to ‘reflect local values and perspectives on young children’s development, as well as scientifically established predictors of their cognitive, language and socio-emotional development’.

This reinforces the view of Brownlee and Berthelsen (2006), in that perspectives on how children develop have to be taken into account, with the addition of this 'scientific' element. There is therefore a need for a HQE to be based on research findings concerning child development as well as views and opinions of stakeholders as to what benefits children's development.

Katz (1994:201) suggests that there are five perspectives on quality, as follows:

- Top-down perspective – that inflicted by government and policy
- Bottom-up perspective – considering how the facility is perceived by children
- Inside/outside perspective – considering how the facility is perceived by families
- Inside perspective – looking at how practitioners in the setting view the facilities
- Ultimate perspective – considering how the community and wider society view the quality of the setting.

All of these perspectives may be necessary, although Katz (1994) argues that taking multiple perspectives can cause complications due to those with different perspectives having different views. However, assessing all viewpoints and taking all opinions into account may lead to enhanced quality (Harrist *et al.*, 2007).

Reed (2012) adds to this discussion by stating that not only is quality based on individuals' perspectives and beliefs, but also is influenced by an individual's positionality. As discussed above, Katz (1994:201) describes seeing things from different perspectives and considers this from the viewpoint of the parent, practitioner or visitor. This 'insider' or 'outsider' view, Katz states, leads an argument as to the necessity of including the

child's voice in the quest to answer what constitutes 'high-quality' Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). In addition to the voice of the child, Hignell (2014) argues that parent's perspectives on HQEs are essential and often overlooked. Dahlberg and Asen (1994) assert that the wider community should be involved in what constitutes a HQE within the early years, rather than leaving it solely to politicians and administrators. However, contradicting this, Dahlberg *et al.* (2013:111) argue that attempting to define quality, and take account of multiple perspectives is, in fact, 'a wild goose chase'. If a high-quality ECEC environment should be one that takes account of child development understanding (Brownlee and Berthelsen, 2006), local values and scientific aspects of child development (UNESCO, 2015), positionality (Katz, 1994) and the views of stakeholders (Hignell, 2014; Dahlberg and Asen, 1994) then it is asserted that this is essential to consider all of these perspectives in order to strive for the best outcomes for young children. All of these aspects therefore need further consideration.

As well as the ongoing debate about the definition of quality within the early years context, there also exists discombobulation over what any pedagogical quality assessment should focus on. One of the first to assert that there should be a multidimensional approach to pedagogical quality, Donabedian (1980), suggested that there be three dimensions to this concept; structure, process and outcome. Sheridan (2007) takes this one step further and alleges that for children to learn and develop within a preschool environment, quality is needed within four dimensions; society, the child, the teacher and the learning environment. Sheridan's theory, it could be proposed, adopts more of the ecological approach as suggested by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and it could be argued that this is an amalgamation of Katz's multiple perspective approach (Katz, 1994:201) as discussed previously. Given the previous discussions surrounding the difficulty of defining quality it could be suggested that to focus on so many dimensions and opinions could result in further confusion and a lack of agreement.



Perhaps more simply then, Sylva *et al.* (2004) assert that structure and process are the measures that are required when assessing the quality of early years provision. It is recognised that a high-quality early learning environment is not purely about the physical elements, but also about what happens within that physical space (Sylva *et al.*, 2004). Whitebread *et al.* (2015) define these two elements, in the context of quality, as structural quality and process quality, and argue that the structural quality is necessary in order that the process quality can be implemented. It is argued that the structural aspects of quality are those which are easier to measure and define (Phillips and Howes, 1987) and that, therefore, those are which tend to be more regulated. Process quality, on the other hand, that which includes the interactions that children have with practitioners, their peers and their environment (Tietze *et al.*, 1996) has been shown to be a more accurate predictor of children's development and outcomes. Quality interactions are those which are important, with children achieving higher levels of comprehension when adults engaged in an informative manner and answered their questions (Sylva *et al.*, 2004). What should be noted however is that, although process quality is shown to be more predictive of outcomes, this element cannot be looked at in isolation, as the structural quality has an impact on the process, and the quality of the structural elements of a provision have been shown to be significant predictors of the process quality (Phillipsen *et al.*, 1997).

When undertaking a literature review and analysing 338 articles from a 28-year period, Fenech (2011) discovered that process features and structural features were those most frequently assessed in research around quality. Structural characteristics such as adult-child ratio, staff qualifications and group sizes (Munton *et al.*, 1995) are often the focus of government policy because, as Blanden *et al.* (2017) argue, these factors are easy to document and to monitor. Process quality features focus more on the activities undertaken within the early years context and therefore concentrate more on the actual experiences of the child, are

generally harder to regulate (Rentzou, 2017), and tend to be measured through observation and relevant rating scales (Mathers *et al.*, 2012). Process characteristics include interactions between adults and children and between peers, activities provided for the development of children and the way that emotional wellbeing levels are nurtured (Brownlee *et al.*, 2009). Sylva *et al.* (2004) realise that it is likely that process quality features and structural quality features can be inter-related and Ceglowski and Bacigalupa (2002) believe that a third dimension should be added when considering this; global quality. They define global quality as a combination of elements from both process quality and structure quality, and deem this to be the aspect that concentrates on 'classroom practice and environments that promote children's growth and learning' (Ceglowski and Bacigalupa, 2002:88).

European Early Childhood Education and Care (CARE), a European project to compare the European perspectives on the concept of quality, and how this impacted on practice in ECEC settings throughout Europe, surveyed 6600 parents and practitioners across nine European countries (Aguiar *et al.*, 2017). What this large-scale project found was, although there were significant differences in the physical environments, there was an overwhelming agreement in what practice elements constituted high-quality. There was agreement that strong educator-child relationships were crucial and that the process quality factors could overcome structural quality issues. European quality indicators have been devised as a result of this study and, with regards to physical environment, assert that staff-child ratios, space to play that is safe and stimulating, with equipment that is developmentally appropriate are all essential. Quiet areas and space for physical play are also classed as important, with areas that 'are easily accessible for children' (Moser *et al.*, 2017). In addition to this, however, is the consideration of how practitioners interact with children and this process quality also therefore needs consideration.

In addition to the structural, process and outcome quality features detailed previously, consideration should also be given to that which is less measurable. Canning (2012:78) states that 'we understand the concept of quality when we experience it, but when asked to describe a quality experience, explanations are very personal and subjective'. Williams (1995) goes so far as to say that quality is a sensory concept and is something that can be felt, seen or heard. Berris and Miller (2011:105) concur: their findings, from a small-scale study, indicate that parents reported a 'general feeling' about the quality of the physical environment and asserted that it was important to feel a 'connection' to the surroundings. However, although parents suggested that they had a 'general feeling' about a HQE, they could not articulate what specific attributes within the environment led them to this feeling (Berris and Miller, 2011:105). This point aligns with the philosophical stance that is transcendental idealism (Kant, 1781), in that some aspects of what is known cannot necessarily be seen or measured (*a posteriori*), but instead are intuition (*a priori*). Transcendental idealism is discussed further in chapter 4.

By discussing various perspectives, as this section has done, the multi-faceted concept of quality is highlighted. There is no definitive response to what, or whom, contributes to high quality within an early years environment. It is recognised however that quality is an aspect that receives attention both nationally and internationally and therefore requires investigation. The national context of quality will now be explored further.

### **3.4: Quality of the ECEC learning environment within England**

Within England, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) is the government organisation with the responsibility of assessing and reporting on the quality of settings. Ofsted's stated aim is to 'regulate and inspect to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages' (Ofsted, 2017:8). Ofsted is a

non-ministerial organisation with no political affiliation, although they have a responsibility to report to parliament (Ofsted, 2019a). They must inspect and regulate following the statutory guidelines, which are set by government (Department for Education (DfE), 2017) so, although they are independent in their approach, Ofsted do have to follow the current political party's policy. Ofsted's methods of inspection and reporting tend to focus more on what occurs within such environments; the process quality (Litjens and Taguma, 2010), rather than the environment itself; the structural quality (Litjens and Taguma, 2010). Of the 78 points that list what providers *must* do in order to meet the safeguarding and welfare requirements for a child (Department for Education (DfE), 2017), there are only five points that mention the environment and in those five points they assess adequate floor space for children, that spaces are 'fit for purpose and suitable for the age of the children cared for and the activities that are provided' (DfE, 2017:29), that there are adequate provisions in the event of a fire, that access to an outdoor area must be provided and that suitable toilet, handwashing and nappy changing facilities are available. This indicates that Ofsted are placing much more emphasis during their inspections on what is happening in the environment, rather than the physicality of such environments. These five points that mention the environment are looking solely at the structural quality elements, being the provision of the physical space, rather than how it is used.

Sammons *et al.* (2017:4) assert that Ofsted judgements are not in place to 'provide detailed measures of quality' and should not be regarded as such, providing what they call instead as 'crude judgements' (2017:5). Mathers *et al.* (2012) go so far as to say that a high-quality rating from Ofsted does not mean that children are playing and learning within a HQE, and the inspection process does not therefore provide a full picture of the quality of any setting. Although in England the standards of early years settings have improved over recent years, there is still some way to go. Ofsted found that in the academic year 2017-18, 86% of settings inspected were of a good or outstanding quality (Ofsted, 2018c).

Worthy of note here is that the systems used by Ofsted can be subject to change, leaving settings often with a sense of 'moving goalposts' (Perryman *et al.*, 2018:156). In fact, at the time of writing Ofsted are proposing further changes to the inspection process and to the judgement areas so again there is uncertainty within the sector over this (Ofsted, 2019b). Courtney (2016) alleges that this is premeditated by Ofsted so that settings do not become complacent. As a result of these shifting sands, it can provide uncertainty and unpredictability in the inspection process (Perryman *et al.*, 2018). It is also reported that these changes, along with other amendments to inspection processes, can cause settings to be on a constant state of alert and to be collecting data and evidence in order to create 'Ofsted stories' to show off their setting in the best light (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2017:947). Settings currently receive notification at around midday the day before an impending Ofsted inspection (Ofsted, 2018a). If a setting is striving to paint the best picture possible of their provision, and doing so in an environment that is subject to change, it is likely that settings end up 'performing' as they feel they should (Perryman *et al.*, 2018:146). This does then raise questions as to the inspection process and hence to the worth of Ofsted ratings in judging quality.

That said, 86% of settings are good or outstanding according to Ofsted (Ofsted, 2018c). This does still mean however that 14% of early years settings are requiring improvement (elements of practice are 'not yet good' (Ofsted, 2018a:39)) or inadequate (indicating that the provision does not have 'an acceptable standard of care and learning' (Ofsted, 2018a:20)), and there are still therefore a great number of children within early years provision in England that is deemed to be of low quality by Ofsted.

It is widely documented that the assessment of quality in England is controversial, again due to the subjective nature of the process, and the particular focus of the inspector in question (Mboyu, 2017). If, as it was

asserted earlier in this chapter, the quality judgement of a provision is partly based on intuition then this is something that is particularly difficult to record and to be consistent with from one inspector to the next. Equally contentiously, it has been noted that there is little evidence to show that inspection processes result in improved quality of provision, using Ofsted quality standards, or improvements in children's outcomes (Rosenthal, 2004; Mathers *et al.*, 2012; Sammons *et al.*, 2017). Notably Rosenthal reported this finding in 2004 and in the decade that has passed Ofsted have begun to focus more heavily on outcomes (Bradbury, 2014) and data within their inspections (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2017), brought about by the requirement that settings present evidence of entry assessments, progress checks, formative assessments, planning and next steps and tracking data (Ofsted, 2018a). This data rich evidence, it could be argued, is one way to potentially remove the subjectivity from an inspection. This data is quantitative in nature and therefore less open to misinterpretation, however in contradiction to this it has been found that schools and settings have begun tactical manoeuvres and are manipulating figures to present a brighter picture of the settings' value (Cowen, 2008). This therefore does not appear to make the inspection process any less controversial.

Although the inspection process in England is controversial, parents still appear to value the results of inspections. When questioned, just over half of parents claimed to have been influenced by the Ofsted inspection results when selecting a setting for their child (Kazimirski *et al.*, 2008). This indicates that even though the sector appears to feel the inspection process to be "inadequate", it is regarded by parents as a credible judge of quality or maybe the reports are used as guidance by parents as this is the only way that they have to gain a formal 'top-down perspective' (Katz, 1994:201).

Another benefit of the Ofsted inspection process is that it is possible to quantify to the political parties how the English education system is

performing. As the government within England fund aspects of early childcare (Gov.UK, 2017), paying £2 billion a year to provide pre-school education for three and four year olds (Blanden *et al.*, 2017), it pays close attention to the services that are funded by public money. Reed (2012) alleges that the top-down force on quality from government and that which is driven by policy, tends to make the whole concept of quality a one-sided debate. Reed argues that this directive provides the dilemma for practitioners who may have very different personal perspectives on what they deem to be high quality childcare, compared to that which is imposed upon them by government. Evangelou *et al.* (2009) argue that this is also the case with regards to how children learn and develop; practitioners' views may differ vastly from that which is expected from Ofsted and as such this can have a direct impact on the quality of the setting and on the education. The discussions in this chapter thus far have indicated how a consensus on what constitutes quality is far from being reached and, in this instance, it could be said that Ofsted provide this consensus and at least give what is expected, nationally, as a guide on which to benchmark.

Although the benefits of Ofsted are contested (Mboyu, 2017), it cannot be a case of 'anything goes' (Moss and Penn, 2003:9) and there does need to be some agreement, at least at national level within the early childhood education and care sector, as to what constitutes quality. Whether settings or individuals agree with it or not, Ofsted provide this. By providing an inspection framework (Ofsted, 2018a) this does ensure that all settings know what it expected of them and provides the government with an overall picture of what it considers to be quality. It could be questioned how countries who have no such system in place can claim that they have quality childcare. As Dahlberg *et al.* (2013:111) state, this 'wild goose chase' of identifying what high-quality in ECEC is, is a specious goal.

This brief overview of the inspection process in England highlights that, although being far from perfect, it is a system that appears to monitor quality in England in a way that looks at both process and structure quality (Whitebread *et al.*, 2015). The section that now follows will discuss the international context with regards to quality within ECEC.

### **3.5: Quality of the learning environment internationally**

Although this study was undertaken in England it is worth, briefly, considering the concept of quality in an international context, to give a complete picture of the worldwide situation. The focus on quality within ECEC internationally has seen a significant rise in interest over recent years (UNICEF, 2012), and is consequently appearing more frequently on agenda of international organisations. If high quality ECEC in England is difficult to define then an international definition is even more elusive (Penn, 2009). However contentious the concept of quality, it still remains something that, internationally, is striven for (United Nations, 2017; UNESCO *et al.*, 2017; European Commission, 2019). The Jomtien Declaration of the World Conference on Education for All inferred that high-quality is that which meets the basic needs of the child (Myers, 2005). In comparison to the English context, this is an example of complete polarisation. Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes (MELQO) (UNESCO *et al.*, 2017) is an international rating scale to be adapted and to measure quality of ECEC settings worldwide. When concentrating on the aspect of the environment, this scale assesses whether children have access to clean drinking water, access to toilets for both girls and boys, the safety of the environment and whether there is sufficient space, inside and outside, for children to sit and play. It is argued that this scale is concentrating on a child's basic needs and this in isolation is insufficient to aid a child's learning and development. These international perspectives highlight the importance of considering the context of the country and, of the community, when assessing the quality of an ECEC environment.



The goals set by The United Nations (UN) (2015a) include sustainable development goal 4 (SDG4) that strives to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', with target 4.2 stating that by 2030 all girls and boys should have access to a quality education. The Global Partnership for Education (2019) reports that there are still in excess of 150 million children throughout the world, between the ages of 3 to 5, who do not attend pre-primary education. In addition to this United Nations (2017) report that 'the lack of trained teachers and the poor condition of schools in many parts of the world are jeopardizing prospects for quality education for all.' The goals prior to the SDGs, the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations, 2000) failed to achieve the goal of quality education for all, hence it being carried on into the new SDGs (United Nations, 2015b). This failure was attributed to the fact that governments worldwide have a very different perspective on what constitutes quality and as such concentrated on attendance rather than the quality aspect (UNESCO and UNICEF, 2012). A further report in 2018 (UNESCO, 2018) reaffirmed the realisation that all were entitled to quality education, however recognised that the original SDG4 target would not be met, and called for the monitoring of global quality. Again though, no definition of what this global quality or monitoring system should be was suggested. This adds evidence to the point made earlier in this section that an international definition of quality is all but impossible. A reason for this is that contexts and cultures are very different from one country to the next (Murray, 2017).

Olsen (2013) reports that, in America, there are many organisations providing information and guidelines for safe outdoor environments and that safety is often associated with structural quality. This may be a reflection on the culture of this country and the fact that the concept of quality, and how this is monitored, across America varies from state to state adds additional complications to the landscape of quality within ECEC settings. Wesley and Buysse (2010) discuss quality within an American context and state that the act of licensing is classed by some within the United States as a mark of quality. Interestingly however they

go on to report that the licensing requirements differ from one state to another and this mark of quality therefore differs as a result. Other countries, including Denmark and Germany, also report that they have different strategies for measuring and recording quality from one municipality to another. This highlights that the concepts of quality can differ from one area of a country to another, let alone from one country to another, and indicates an even greater complexity in these countries and aligns with the views of UNESCO (2015) as discussed earlier, that a HQE should be reflective of the local values and opinions on young children's development.

What international studies have highlighted is that the concept of high quality is not a uniform approach and the context of the country and culture in which the setting is situated is extremely important (Myers, 2005). Many countries have no regulation of their early years sector, and a wide variation in practice exists internationally (OECD, 2006). Although it is asserted by some that a quality framework is not necessary (Woodhead, 1996), it is worth noting that these frameworks can have their advantages. Australia have only recently introduced a national quality framework, in 2012, (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, 2017) and whether this is due to this national strategy or not, since the introduction of this, Australia has seen an improvement in many of the measurable outcomes of children. This has been notable within the area of language and cognitive skills, with 8.9% of children being 'vulnerable' in this area before the introduction of the quality framework, dropping to 6.8% showing vulnerability after the first year of the framework being implemented, and having dropped even further to 6.5% in 2015 (Australian Early Development Census, 2017). The term 'vulnerability' in this context is not defined and could be perceived subjectively. It could also be argued that this improvement was due to factors aside from the national quality framework. However, it is asserted that the renewed focus on practice and consideration from practitioners of a framework, assists with reflecting on practice and can therefore lead to improvements, whatever they are called, as a result (Urban, 2012).

In an attempt to define factors that influence young children's learning, an international assessment tool is currently being piloted, to assess five years old within participating countries (Moss., 2016). The International Early Learning Study (IELS) is widely contested (Moss and Urban, 2017; Urban, 2017; Carr *et al.*, 2016; Urban and Swadener, 2016), one of the reasons being that the universal application and assessment of early childhood does not account for the diversity and complexity that cultures and context reflect in individualised pedagogies. It is argued that this is also the case with regards to quality measurement. Based on the discussions around the international situation of quality it is asserted that an international rating scale is unnecessary and albeit impossible (Murray, 2017), with Penn (2011:xi) going so far as to say that the search for a final definition of quality is 'a search for fool's gold'. Woodhead (1996) concurs and argues that the global application of a single framework is unnecessary and that 'such a framework might inevitably lead to a world of uniformity, a standardised recipe for the quality of childhood' (Woodhead, 1996:17). It is suggested therefore that a one-size-fits-all approach would be detrimental to children; not recognising their diversity and differences (Moss and Urban, 2017). Consequently, it is recognised that this research can only focus on the quality of environments in an English context and it is this approach that was adopted throughout. The section that now follows will consider current methods for measuring quality within ECEC learning environments.

### **3.6: Rating scales for measuring the quality of the learning environment**

This chapter so far has discussed the complications of defining quality and the measurement of quality appears to be just as contentious (Bisceglia *et al.*, 2009). Quality rating scales have been devised (The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) (Harms *et al.*, 2005); The Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Well-being (SSTEW) scale (Siraj *et al.*, 2015); The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) (Pianta *et al.*, 2008); Preschool Outdoor Environment Measurement Scale (POEMS)

(Hestenes *et al.*, 2005); the Early Childhood Physical Environment Rating Scale (ECPERS) (Moore and Sugiyama, 2007)) and all have a different focus which, in itself, indicates that quality is an issue that has no agreed definition. Some focus on all aspects of ECEC and look at process and structural quality, and others have more of a defined remit and look at specific elements associated with quality, in greater detail. These will be discussed further in this section but what is important for this research project is the observation that these quality scales do not appear to be transferable between environments, not general enough to be able to compare indoor, outdoor and NEs (Richardson and Murray, 2016).

Although an existing rating scale has not been found that is appropriate for this research, it is acknowledged that there are quality rating scales that are used successfully and with confidence around the world (Zill *et al.*, 2003). The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) (Harms *et al.*, 2005) is the most widely used quality rating scale that has been adopted around the world (Sakai *et al.*, 2003), and although it can be used to compare across settings and contexts, it is not always possible to look at the 'fine-grained detail' of how environments support certain aspects of development (Gosling, 2016:30). It should also be questioned when considering the complications of defining quality in an international context, how applicable this international assessment tool can be in a worldwide arena, let alone between environments. When I undertook a similar study to this previously (Richardson and Murray, 2016), it was noted that ECERS is not a tool that is suitable when comparing and contrasting FS environments as the rating elements are not relevant to the outdoor, NE. There are rating elements within the ECERS framework section of 'language-reasoning' that assess 'books and pictures' (Harms *et al.*, 2005:34) for example, and this is obviously not relevant when in a FS environment.

Katz (1994:200) asserts that where these rating scales look at ratios, group sizes and what is classed as 'developmentally appropriate practice',

they present a framework that is too narrow when aiming to conceptualize quality. The concept of 'developmentally appropriate practice' is problematic, particularly in an English context, where the curriculum promotes the 'unique child' (DfE, 2017:6). With rating scales assessing practice that is appropriate to development, this again becomes a subjective measurement (Brownlee and Berthelsen, 2006) (as discussed in 3.3) and adds confusion. It is argued that when scales such as ECERS look at such a wide range of attributes this can result in a narrow focus of quality and is not then appropriate when attempting to look at a specific area of development. Some scales do, however, look at specific areas of development. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) (Pianta *et al.*, 2008) concentrates on teacher-student interactions and considers how these interactions link to achievement and development. It could be argued that this is partly applicable to this research, as has been mentioned above it is important to consider what happens within the environment as well as the physicality. However, CLASS looks purely at the interactions and this is just one element of what is deemed important when rating quality of environments overall. Similarly to the CLASS scales, the Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Well-being (SSTEW) scale (Siraj *et al.*, 2015) could be partially applicable to this research. Sub-section 3 of the SSTEW scale concentrates on 'supporting and extending language and communication' (Siraj *et al.*, 2015:22) but again focuses on how practitioners support the language and interact with the children. These scales were therefore not deemed appropriate for use in this research.

Where ECERS (Harms *et al.*, 2005) focusses mainly on the indoor environment, POEMS (Preschool Outdoor Environment Measurement Scale) (Hestenes *et al.*, 2005) is designed purely for the use in the outdoors, and assesses the quality of the outdoor environment using 56 items which have been grouped in five domains. These five domains are physical environment, interactions, play and learning settings, program and teacher/caregiver role. 21 of the 56 items (38%) fall into the domains of interactions and teacher/caregiver role, placing a large

emphasis on the interactions that are occurring within the environment rather than the environment itself. It was discussed earlier in this chapter that the concept of quality can be determined by individuals' perceptions of how children develop (Brownlee and Berthelsen, 2006) and it may be that the POEMS scale was devised by those who strongly believe that children develop through interaction with others. Interactionism is the theoretical framework that this project is based on. This therefore needed further consideration and is discussed in the following chapter. Although POEMS may be applicable to the outdoor elements of this study however, it is not transferable between the indoor and outdoor environments and is therefore not appropriate as a tool overall in this context and no elements of this scale were therefore utilised in this research.

Cooper (2015:86) proposes a set of 'minimum standards to promote quality natural outdoor learning environments', and these minimum standards include things such as the requirement to have at least two different areas in which to play and two gross motor features (such as climbing, balancing etc). This set of standards could be applied to OCs also with modification, but again does not provide the transferability between environments that this research requires, as would not be suited to indoor environments. Also, this set of criteria sets out the *minimum standards* and it is asserted that this research is regarding what is high-quality and therefore requires more than what is regarded as minimum standards.

In Australia, the Early Childhood Physical Environment Rating Scale (ECPERS) (Moore and Sugiyama, 2007) has been developed with the intention of assessing the quality of the physical environment and the impact of such on a child's learning and development. Berris and Miller (2011) allege that this scale is useful when establishing a new environment, or when undertaking renovations, however is not so relevant for day-to-day practice and therefore is not widely used. Berris

and Miller (2011) also assert that this scale was devised without consultation of stakeholders, and is therefore derived on personal views and opinions. As it has been asserted throughout the previous chapter it is not purely the physical environment that needs consideration. Also, the international complexities pose an ongoing issue, as discussed previously and this therefore means that no element of the ECPERS was utilised in this project.

When utilising any quality rating scale Rentzou (2017) reports on using these rating scales with caution. They have been found to report on the aspects at a set point in time. It should be noted that quality should be an ongoing process rather than just a snapshot in time (O'Kane, 2005) and, additionally, societies and cultures change over time (Rosenthal, 2003) and this has implications on the understanding of quality at any given time. Although some of these rating scales are used internationally, particularly ECERS (Harms *et al.*, 2005), it is suggested that it is not always possible for quality assessment frameworks to be utilised on an international basis (Rosenthal, 2003). Siraj-Blatchford and Wong (1999) indicate concern over validity of such frameworks and how they remain valid when used in a cross-cultural situation. Boocock (1995) found, from studying 13 different countries, that the characteristics of what is regarded to be high quality, and the values of these settings, cannot be generalised between cultures. As mentioned previously the aim is not to create a standardised recipe for the quality of childhood' (Woodhead, 1996:17), and as such it is imperative that an international rating scale is not inflicted where not needed.

So far throughout this chapter, the concept of quality has been illustrated as being particularly contentious. The section that now follows will consider why quality is something considered in such detail and why it is important.

### **3.7: Why is a high-quality environment important?**

Myers (2005) views quality as a concept that can be evidenced and is something that is inherent in practice, identifiable and universal. He recognises that high quality childcare can make a difference to children and this is 'particularly true for language and cognitive outcomes' (Myers, 2005:7), and that equally, poor quality childcare can have negative effects on a child's development. Peisner-Feinberg *et al.* (2001) suggest that this is the case irrespective of the child's background and even those not from disadvantaged backgrounds are seen to benefit from high-quality childcare.

Going beyond the early years and considering the longer-term benefits, it is reported that high quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) helps individuals with lifelong learning, reduction of poverty, increased fertility, greater levels of females in the workforce, enhanced intergenerational social mobility and improved social and economic development for the wider society (OECD, 2012). This indicates that the benefits of a HQE for children to play and learn within, is crucial not only to the early years but can impact on the whole life of the child, and the society in which they live and work. The Reggio Emilia approach in Italy advocates the need for the environment to be the third educator, with the child and the practitioner being first and second, giving the environment almost a lifelike quality (Strong-Wilson and Ellis, 2007) and therefore an importance in a child's development. Berris and Miller (2011:102) assert that the quality of the physical environment is 'a critical partner' for a child's social, cognitive and physical development. Although there is no mention of SLD in this assertion, it is argued that the quality of the environment is just as crucial for this area of development and this aspect of development should be given additional attention due to the importance of such development, which was highlighted in chapter 2. What is pertinent to this study is the research that indicates that children who spend their time in low quality early years provision are more likely to have problems with social and language development (OECD, 2001,



2006). As noted in chapter 2, problems with language development can impact on life outcomes (Bercow, 2008). Taken together, these points suggest that support for children's language development may be a feature of a 'high-quality' ECEC environment.

Although much focus of a HQE is placed on outcomes; the educational benefit for the child (Blanden *et al.*, 2016), Myers (2005:15) declares that focussing purely on outcomes would be 'unfortunate', however does not then suggest an alternative. It is worth noting however that a HQE within an educational establishment is insufficient in isolation to produce positive outcomes for children. Other factors such as parenting (McCartney, 1984; Sylva *et al.*, 2004; Tamis-LeMonda *et al.*, 2001), socio-economic background (Hart and Risley, 1995; Sosu and Ellis, 2014) and biological factors (Molfese and Molfese, 1997) can also impact on a child's development. There are therefore many variables which can contribute to a child's learning and development and any one of these factors cannot be held totally accountable in isolation.

### **3.8: Literature that makes an association between the learning environment and speech and language development**

Examples of extant literature identify an association between the learning environment and SLD. When considering the discussion points from section 3.2 regarding the concept of quality of the early years environment, any association between a 'quality' learning environment and SLD is again an area that is open to debate and individual perception. Reed (2012) states that a HQE 'should contain favourable conditions for growing, learning, experimenting, listening and speaking' (2012:17). Yet there are no definitions as to what these 'favourable conditions' should include, leaving this open to interpretation and personal subjectivity. Canning (2012:82) advocates that the environment is crucial for 'cultivating quality play' and asserts that natural resources need to be provided to allow open ended play. It is acknowledged that a HQE needs to provide a variety of resources, providing a freedom of choice and the

ability to revisit and extend concepts through play (Kadis, 2007). However, in contradiction to this, McCartney (1984) asserts that the amount and variety of play equipment was found not to influence children's language development in her study. Whatever the situation with regards to quantity of resources, it is suggested that a HQE should be one that is interactive and gives children the opportunity to revisit play but also to discover new things and learn via new experiences (O'Brien, 2009). Whitebread *et al.* (2015) assert that resources should be open ended – that is with multiple uses, and therefore prompting children's imagination and adaptation. Playful learning, as opposed to formal learning, is recognised as particularly beneficial for developing language skills (Christie and Roskos, 2006). There is a growing body of research that indicates that quality play needs to provide challenge and allow children to take risks (Mitchell *et al.*, 2006; Gill, 2007). Evangelou *et al.* (2009) list experiences that aid children's development, yet there is no mention in the list of the environment in its physical sense. It could be suggested that it is not the environment per se that leads to quality for children, but more what occurs within that environment; the process quality aspects (Sylva *et al.*, 2004). However, one could also argue that the environment affects interactions and experiences and without the structural quality then the process quality cannot occur. What this aspect of the literature review indicates however is that a HQE is much more than the basic structure of a building and the facilities within.

It could be purported that a purpose of a learning environment should be to encourage play, which in turn should encourage learning. Pramling Samuelsson and Fler (2008) assert that play that leads to learning is achieved by providing an environment and resources that are open-ended and support child led, initiative led play. Bruce (2011:24) suggests that children should be allowed to 'wallow' in their play, that is to fully immerse themselves, for them to achieve quality experiences, and to enhance their learning. Richardson and Murray (2016) found that 'wallowing' did lead to a richer quality of SL and is a point for further investigation.

Meaningful dialogue with others, engaging in problem solving activities together and being able to direct the conversation (Maccoby, 2007; Whitebread *et al.*, 2015) aids development of SL skills, and it is therefore argued that an environment that promotes these behaviours is a key component of a high-quality ECEC environment. Jarman (2007) argues that an environment needs to be established with space set aside to encourage language development, that provides stimulation but at the same time is cosy and conducive to encouragement of communication. The Every Child a Talker (ECAT) programme (now archived) (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008b), a national programme to encourage communication within early years settings, advised that communication friendly settings do not require a large amount of resources and do not require spacious, purpose built spaces for communication. It could be asserted that not only should specific areas be set aside for language encouragement, but that the whole early childhood setting be established with that goal in mind.

It is suggested that an environment that is interesting to the children, including play that is engaging and stimulating, will encourage language (Gosling, 2016). Claxton and Carr (2004) acknowledge that this is just one element of, what they call, a potentiating environment which allows children to express their views and opinions, to collaborate in their play and learning and to be actively extended in their learning. This opportunity for collaboration, and using 'rules for talk' (Whitebread *et al.*, 2015), is shown to improve language usage (Coltman *et al.*, 2013) and it could be argued therefore an environment that promotes this is of a 'high-quality'. It is asserted that to create a HQE, it should be one which draws children in and reflects their interests so that they have the desire, and the disposition, to talk and hence to learn (Curtis and Carter, 2003). Phillips (2015) summarises this by stating:

For any learning to flourish we need to feel that we belong in that space, that we identify with it and have a sense of place for that room. From this place of comfort we relax and become open to the demands of learning. And language and literacy permeates all learning.

(Phillips, 2015:4)

Seligman (2011) asserts that for an individual to 'flourish' and to achieve happiness and well-being, there needs to exist five elements for which he provides the acronym PERMA. These five elements, he contests, are positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and achievement (Seligman, 2011:558). It could be argued that an environment that fosters these elements is one which will draw children in (Curtis and Carter, 2003) and promote a sense of belonging (Phillips, 2015) and therefore promote language and learning.

Marshall and Lewis (2014) found that practitioners reported that, to encourage language development, the environment should provide space, should be clean, should have limited noise and should have activities available to the children different to those which they have access to within the home environment. Evans (2006) adds weight to this, stating that exposure to loud and uncontrollable noise is detrimental to children's cognitive development, increases stress and in turn has a negative impact on language skills. Honig (2002) proposes that ECEC settings should provide adequate amounts of space to limit children's stress levels, and therefore promote learning. Stress in young children produces cortisol and results in reduced cognitive ability (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000; Shanker, 2012) and therefore, it is asserted that stressful environments should be avoided at all costs. It has been recognised that well defined boundaries and spaces result in more positive interactions within the classroom and this, in turn, results in children spending more time immersed in their play (Prochner *et al.*, 2008).

The English early childhood curriculum, the EYFS, states that children should be provided with an 'enabling environment' with stimulating

resources, that should be reflective of all cultures and communities, rich play experiences and support for children to take risks and explore (DfE, 2017:21). It is alleged that the concept of reflecting cultures and communities can, in itself, be a challenging concept (Devarakonda, 2013). Towns and cities within England are becoming more and more diverse (Baldock, 2011) and to represent all the cultures and communities can often present challenges for practitioners, particularly with how they interpret the EYFS requirement to reflect all of these cultures (Ling-Yin, 2007). Ainscow *et al.* (2016) report that, between the years of 2005 and 2015, the number of children due to start primary school and who were of ethnic minority, rose from 19.3% to 30.4%, and the number of children who speak English as an additional language (EAL) rose from 11.6% to 19.4%. These figures indicate that cultures and communities have changed radically over the last ten years, and this obviously has an impact on early years provision. If, as the DfE state, an enabling environment need to reflect culture and community, these statistics are extremely relevant. What this also indicates is that this is an ever-changing concept, the culture and community can be changing from one year to the next, dependant on how transient this community is, and it could therefore be asserted that the environment also needs to be ever changing to reflect this transient community. McCartney (1984:244) states that 'since children learn the language of their culture, the environment must play a role in the development of language'. This is an area that was therefore given further consideration as this study progressed.

When looking specifically at the outdoor environment, Olsen (2013:11) argues that this is the area that is often last to be discussed, and is an 'after-thought' when establishing a learning environment. She argues that in a 'high quality' outdoor area children should be able to engage in natural play, should have access to loose parts and building materials, should have the opportunity to engage in dramatic play and discovery play and should have the space to move around. Hartle and Johnson (1993) propose that the highest quality outdoor spaces are often NEs,

with no planned activities or resources, but instead allow children to utilise the natural resources surrounding them to create and organise their own play. OECD (2012) recognise that a combination of quality outdoor and indoor activities are important, that provide a wide range of play opportunities, although as a worldwide organisation they appear to shy away from clearly defining what they mean by these terms. With the difficulties highlighted earlier in this chapter regarding cultural relevance, this is not surprising. Little *et al.* (2011) expand on the need to provide outdoor opportunities by asserting that these outdoor play environments should encourage risky play. Risky play in this context is that which is defined by Stephenson (2003:36) as 'attempting something never done before, feeling on the borderline of "out of control" often because of height or speed, and overcoming fear'. Lester and Russell (2008:152) warn that an 'increasing preoccupation with risk and fear has served to diminish the quality of play provision' and are therefore indicating that a lack of risky play is detrimental to the quality of the environment and therefore on the quality of learning and play. When viewing risky play from the concept of environment, Sandseter (2007) alleges that certain characteristics of the environment are necessary to contribute to quality risky play, and those elements include dangerous physical elements where children could fall, secluded areas where children could feel that they are trapped or lost, and dangerous aspects where children can climb and potentially fall.

Worth noting is the requirement of the English curriculum, the EYFS (DfE, 2017), which is that children have access to the outdoors on a daily basis, however, as mentioned previously, there exists no guidelines on the characteristics of this outdoor environment. Olsen (2013) recognises that there is more of an emphasis in engaging children within the outdoor environment, however at the same time points out that the discussion around what constitutes a high-quality outdoor environment has been missing.

### **3.9: Summary of what makes a high-quality environment**

From analysing the extant literature on what constitutes a high-quality learning environment, it is asserted that the following is necessary to encourage children's learning:

- Rich and engaging holistic play activities – those experiences that allow children to 'wallow' in their play (Bruce, 2011:24; Richardson and Murray, 2016), at the same time encouraging development (Pramling Samuelsson and Fleer, 2007).
- Space and time in which to explore – an environment which provides space, well defined boundaries (Prochner *et al.*, 2008), and encourages exploration through curiosity (Whitebread *et al.*, 2015).
- Culturally reflective environment – reflecting children's interests (Curtis and Carter, 2003) as well as reflecting the culture of the community and families within that community (McCartney, 1984).
- Support with risk taking – the need for children to be able to 'attempt(ing) something never done before' (Stephenson, 2003:36).
- Encouraging the child's voice – allowing children to engage in meaningful dialogue with others (Maccoby, 2007) and encouraging them to express their views and opinions (Claxton and Carr, 2004).

What is worth noting here however is that these attributes are summarised as those which provide a quality learning environment in general as a result of this literature review. There exists little literature that reports on the impact of the environment on SLD. Marshall and Lewis (2014) report that the aspects which impact on language development are unknown and Marshall *et al.* (2007:28) assert that 'advice about altering the child's environment should be given with care'. As a result of this uncertainty this provides additional need for this aspect of the research and highlights an aspect of the originality of this study.

### **3.10: Conclusion**

Although, as discussed throughout this chapter, some argue that the question of quality is open to interpretation and is a fluid concept based on individuals' opinions, it is also recognised that this fluidity cannot be left to its own devices. It cannot be a case of 'anything goes' (Moss and Penn, 2003:9) and it is argued that there does need to be some agreement, at least at national level within the ECEC sector, as to what is acceptable, and required, to ensure that children are experiencing the highest quality provisions, based on the values and perceptions of a given society. It is asserted therefore that high-quality early years provision *is* important. This chapter, and this study, therefore continued with the assertion that high-quality is essential, and that the quality of the environment, with a focus on SLD, warranted further exploration and study.

It has been highlighted that although many rating scales currently exist, there is not one in existence that met the needs of this research. There does not appear to be a quality rating scale that can assess the quality of the indoor, outdoor and FS play and learning environment, with a particular emphasis on SLD. It should not be a case of 'anything goes' (Moss and Penn, 2003:9) and some transferability of a scale is necessary to support such an important area of children's development (Richardson and Murray, 2016).

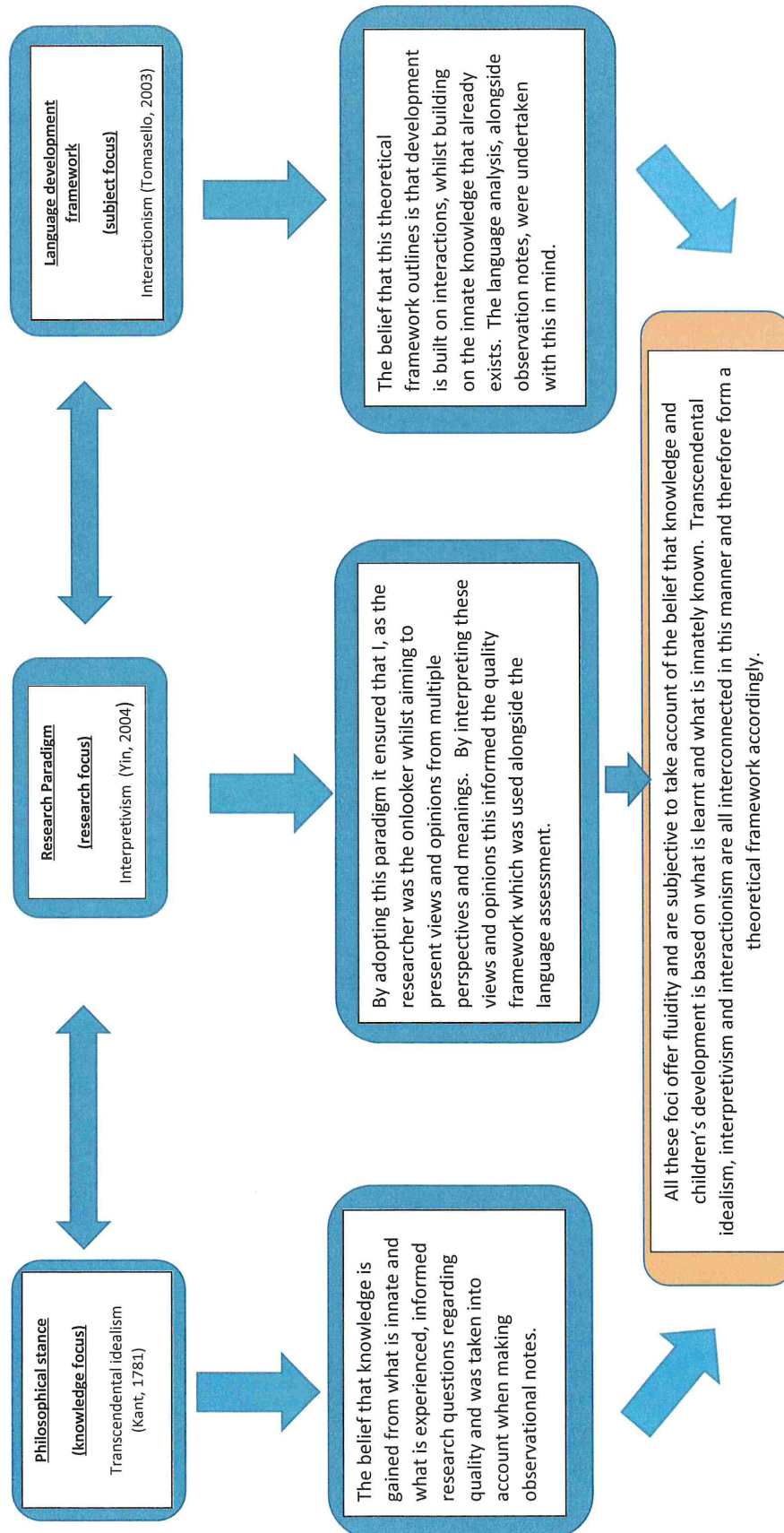
Although it is asserted throughout this chapter that a rating scale is necessary, an important conclusion from this review of literature is that an international rating scale is neither possible or applicable. The differences in cultures and opinions on quality make this a 'wild goose chase' (Dahlberg *et al.*, 2013:111). As such it has been concluded that the rating scale that is devised as a result of this study should initially be just for application within an English context. Urban (2012:478) states that 'quality is constructed in the ways we talk about it and the ways we aim at achieving it' and this should be constructed and talked about from an English perspective, at this time. At the same time though, Moss and



Penn (2003) assert that quality measures should be dynamic, adaptable and able to change over time as requirements change and as perspectives change, and this needed further consideration as the quality rating scale was devised.

It has been argued throughout this chapter that when considering the concept of quality, multiple perspectives are required. Although it is asserted that this approach can cause confusion (Katz, 1994; Dahlberg *et al.*, 2013), the view of Harrist *et al.* (2007) is the one that remained most dominant for the purposes of this research; that taking all viewpoints and opinions into account will lead to enhanced quality.

This literature review has therefore highlighted that a quality rating scale that is transferable between environments, needed to be devised with the intention of assessing quality from the SL perspective. This will fill the void that currently exists within this area, as currently this transferable tool does not exist. The chapter that follows will present the research design that was adopted and the rationale behind the decisions made. Firstly however, the following page (fig.3.1) shows how the paradigm and stance taken throughout this study synthesise to create the theoretical framework.



## The synthesis of paradigms and construction of the theoretical framework

This will be discussed in detail in the chapter that follows

Fig.3.1: The synthesis of paradigms and construction of the theoretical framework.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Methodology chapter 1: Rationale for research design**

#### **4.1: Introduction**

This chapter will restate the research aim and objectives and will discuss the overall approach to the project. It will argue for the need to adopt a theoretical framework and then compare paradigms and will assert that interpretivism is appropriate for this study. This chapter will provide a rationale for the adoption of a qualitative approach and will discuss the reasons behind the choice of multiple case studies as the selected research strategy. The chapter will explore the philosophical stance and will claim that Kant's transcendental idealism is the approach that was appropriate for this study, as this takes the stance that knowledge is both gained through rationalism and empiricism, which, it is argued, mirrors the theoretical framework which was discussed in the previous chapters and shown pictorially (fig.3.1) on the previous page. This chapter will argue that all the foci adopted link together and provide a cohesion to the study.

#### **4.2: Overall research aim and objectives**

The aim of this study was to ascertain if factors in three different learning environment types for children aged 3-5 years, are associated with the quality of their utterances and if so, the nature and effects of those factors.

The study objectives were:

1. To identify stakeholders' perspectives on defining features of an IC environment, an OC environment and a NE in the field of early childhood in England

2. To establish the impact of the environment on the quality of young children's utterances
3. To devise a framework that identifies features of early learning environments that may affect young children's SLD
4. To establish whether the quality of young children's utterances differ according to specific factors in NEs, IC environments and OC environments and what those specific factors are
5. To use results from Objectives 1-4 to establish evidence for what constitutes a high-quality learning environment for young children's SLD.

The aim and objectives addressed in this study focused on responding to the following questions:

- RQ1: In the field of early childhood in England, are there distinctive features of an IC environment, an OC environment and a NE, according to stakeholders? If so, what are these features?
- RQ2: What are the impacts of the different environments on the quality of young children's utterances?
- RQ3: What elements should be included in a framework to distinguish features of learning environments that may affect young children's SLD?
- RQ4: Does the quality of young children's utterances differ according to specific factors in NEs, IC environments and OC environments? What are those specific factors?
- RQ5: What constitutes a high-quality learning environment for young children's SLD?

It was necessary to adopt a phased approach to this research due to the different elements that were to make up the overall project. The three phases are shown in table 4.1:

Table 4.1: Plan for phased approach and alignment to objectives and RQs

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Relevant Objectives and RQs</b>	<b>Main Activity</b>
One	Objectives 1, 2 RQ1, RQ2	Gather stakeholders' perspectives on (i) quality learning environments for young children and (ii) impact of environment on young children's utterances.
Two	Objective 3 RQ3	Develop and pilot a research-informed early learning environment quality framework, focused on SLD
Three	Objectives 2, 4, 5 RQ2, RQ4, RQ5	Describe, compare and evaluate factors of different learning environments and the quality of children's utterances within them to identify what constitutes a high-quality learning environment for young children's SLD

To provide a logical structure to this study it was necessary to adopt a methodology that was cohesive and considered all the necessary aspects and phases of the project (see page 86). The need for a subject focus (language development framework), a research focus (the research paradigm) and a knowledge focus (philosophical stance) provided the structure of the theoretical framework. The different aspects of this framework will now be discussed further.

#### **4.3: Theoretical framework: Subject focus - interactionism**

Although Green (2014) asserts that there is much confusion over the terms theoretical framework and conceptual framework, and the terms can be used interchangeably, a theoretical framework was adopted as the basis for the project. Parahoo (2006) suggests that a theoretical framework is needed when a research project is to be guided by one

particular theory. The literature review, chapter 2, indicated that interactionism would be appropriate for this study (Tomasello, 2003) when considering language development and although Green (2014) states that the notion of theoretical frameworks can cause confusion, basing this project on the theory of interactionism secured cohesion throughout the research and provided sound, coherent argument to the rationale behind the study. It is also noted that the use of theoretical frameworks can help with generalisation if needed (Yin, 2014). This will be discussed further as this chapter proceeds.

Interactionism is the belief that development occurs through interaction with others, interaction with the environment, and the co-construction of knowledge being borne from these interactions. Siraj-Blatchford *et al.* (2002:12) argue that, from an early years perspective, interactionism is an 'open framework approach where children are provided with "free" access to a range of instructive learning environments in which adults support children's learning.' This claim assumes that an adult's involvement is necessary to aid a child's development. In addition, Goswami and Bryant (2007:20) assert that interactions are necessary to encourage development and that 'families, peers and teachers are all important.' Goswami and Bryant take it one step further than Siraj-Blatchford *et al.* (2002) and include peers as parties in the interaction dynamic, and this point is worth noting for this research. Thinking beyond interactionism in the human sense, Forman (1998) believes that the environment is crucial to aid a child's development and goes so far as to say that environment is the third teacher when encouraging children's learning. What is important to note therefore is that interactionism is the basis of the theoretical framework, and this is interactionism with regards to interactions with environments as well as interactions with others; adults and peers alike. It could be argued that social constructivism would have been an appropriate theoretical framework for this study, however this approach does not take account of the innate ability of individuals, more the impact of the surroundings and the people within (Poerksen, 2004), and this therefore was not deemed appropriate. The

aims and objectives of this research required deep levels of investigation into the environment in which children are immersed and it was this that needed to remain central to this project as it progressed and as the methodology was explored. This interactionism adopts the inductive approach, aiming for the generation of new theory emerging from the data (Neuman, 2003). The inductive approach does not provide certainty about the outcomes of the research until the end of the project, and although Popper (1934) asserts that a project of this kind could never provide certainty, this phased study aimed to reach a conclusion through a thorough approach.

Positivism was discounted for this study as this would need to focus primarily on quantitative data (Robson, 2011) and this research was qualitative in nature. Also, Blaikie (2007:183) asserts that when adopting a positivist approach it is not possible to separate 'facts' and 'values'. This research intended to look at both 'facts' and 'values' and therefore needed to adopt an approach that was able to do just this. Interpretivism was therefore deemed appropriate in this instance and was the framework adopted for the subject focus element of the theoretical framework (see page 86).

#### **4.4: Philosophical stance: Knowledge focus - transcendental idealism**

When considering the philosophical approach (knowledge focus) to this project I believe, and therefore adopt, the attitude that mirrors that of Kant's philosophy of transcendental idealism (1781, translated by Puhar 1996). Kant believed that to construct knowledge it was necessary to combine rationalism, that which is just known through reason, and empiricism, knowledge through experience of objects in the world. In his theory of transcendental idealism Kant argues that both reason and experience are necessary to construct knowledge of how the world operates. Kant (1781) suggests that cognitive ability falls into these two conceptual categories; *a priori* and *a posteriori*. *A priori* being

propositions which have no basis on first-hand experiences, and as such are pure reasoning, and a *posteriori* being propositions which are based on experience but can only lead to judgement in combination with cognitive activity. According to Kant, knowledge is not formed purely when the mind integrates itself to the outside world but instead when the world conforms to the requirements of human sensibility and rationality. This is the stance that has been adopted throughout this research as this was aligned to personal belief. It can be argued that knowledge is constructed and obtained through a combination of rationalism, that which is “just known” and empiricism, that which is known through experience and interaction. I believe that this is how children develop. I believe that everything that is known by an individual is not necessarily learnt through experience (Skinner, 1957), but sometimes is simply known (Chomsky, 1957). It is argued that a combination of theoretical approaches are often the ways that children learn, through logical reasoning. The experiences that we are exposed to within the world are not separated from time and concept of the world itself and I believe therefore that knowledge is constructed using both learnt and innate belief. An example of this innate knowledge is when one goes to look at a new home. Intuition is often a reason given as to why a new home was chosen because “it just felt right”. This may or may not be based on experience but may just be that innate knowledge that something is as it should be. Damasio (2006:188) describes this intuition as ‘the mysterious mechanism by which we arrive at the solution of a problem without reasoning toward it.’ This combination of innate and learnt knowledge has been acknowledged within the literature review when discussing language development (chapter 2) and it has been asserted that children learn and develop their language through this combined approach. It was therefore deemed to be appropriate that this approach was adopted throughout the whole project and fitted in a manner that aligned personal belief with theoretical application.

It could be argued that Kant’s theory of transcendental idealism was not appropriate for this study, as this theory was devised with metaphysics in



mind, and therefore had a rationale that centred around ontology; that is the science of existence, be that from a physical perspective or a religious perspective, and how categories within this field relate to each other. However, Macmurray (1957) alleges that this stance can be applied to the wider research field due to the two aspects of the approach. The two stances, being those of rationalism and empiricism, are particularly appropriate for this study as they apply equally to both elements of the research; firstly, the quality of the environment and secondly the concept of language development. Table 4.2 below shows how the elements of transcendental idealism relate to the different aspects of this project.

Table 4.2: How transcendental idealism relates to the study

	Rationalism	Empiricism
Quality aspect of the research project	Participants will have intuition and emotions about what makes an environment one of quality (Berris and Miller, 2011). Participants will have a sense of what “feels right” within an environment.	Knowledge will be held on what makes an environment one of quality. Based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Past experiences</li> <li>• Statutory requirements</li> <li>• Self-reflection</li> <li>• Application of theory</li> </ul>
Language aspect of the research project	Chomsky’s (1957) theory applies here – aspects of language are recognised as being innate and are applied without experience. Children express emotion through language as a result of inbuilt feelings.	Children express language through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience with others – peers/adults</li> <li>• Experience of environments</li> <li>• Experience of objects and provocations</li> </ul>

Scruton (1982) recognises that Kant's theory (1781) is widely referred to by philosophers, although there is no agreement as to the strength of Kant's arguments due to the complexity of the concepts. Some criticise Kant's approach due to the uncertainty over the element of rationalism and the inability to measure these aspects, making them too abstract (Heidegger, 1927, translated in 1962 by Macquarrie and Robinson) however, for this project located within the social sciences, it is argued that it is an appropriate approach. Gottschlich (2015:312) alleges that an element of this transcendental idealist approach is that 'the standpoint of reflection.....is consistently thought through to its end'. It is argued that as this research is focusing on participants reflecting on what they deem to be a HQE and then applying these reflections to the subsequent phases of the research, then this makes this even more appropriate as an approach. Damasio's somatic marker hypothesis (1996) also contests Kant's approach, as Damasio believes that an individual's brain is structured purely on experiences and the recollection of those experience are what generate the feelings within a situation. This hypothesis however is founded on those adults who have encountered brain damage and therefore should not be viewed as a general theory for all (Damasio, 1996). Damasio would still argue however that all 'reasoning....depend[s] on the availability of knowledge about situations...', indicating that an individual must have experienced something or have learnt about it, to know. I do not believe this to be the case. I strongly believe that as individuals we can know something based purely on the subjective as well as the objective (Kant, 1781), and this is evidenced when visiting new environments, as discussed above.

It could be asserted that Dewey's philosophical approach (1933) - pragmatism - would have been an appropriate stance to adopt for this project. Dewey argues that individuals think and construct knowledge when confronted with problems and the pragmatic approach results in these problems being solved. However, this takes the deficit approach and assumes a problem exists from the outset. It is not assumed in this

research project that a problem within environments exists, so pragmatism would not have been appropriate.

Although transcendental idealism may not be a common approach outside the world of theology, Thomas (2007:96) calls for 'thought not to be constrained within the ligatures of particular kinds of supposed theory' when embarking on research. Turner (2010:vii) states that general theories can be 'rather insulated from each other, with little cross-fertilisation' and it is argued that this 'cross-fertilisation' is necessary when researching in an innovative fashion. This approach is therefore appropriate in this case and was therefore that which was adopted throughout.

#### **4.5: Paradigm**

When discussing paradigms, it is necessary to firstly state the definition of paradigm that was being followed in this instance. The term paradigm itself has many different meanings, with Masterman (1970) recognising that Kuhn (1970) had identified and documented twenty-one different definitions. Masterman (1970:59) describes a paradigm as 'an artefact which can be used as a puzzle-solving device... paradigm has got to be a concrete picture used analogically; because it has got to be a way of seeing.' Kuhn (1970) summarised his definitions into two principle meanings;

On the one hand, it stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by the members of a given community. On the other, it denotes one sort of element in that constellation, the concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed as models or as examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles of normal science.

(Kuhn, 1970:175)

Kuhn's focus here is on the scientific element of study and as there is no 'puzzle' to solve in this research project this second aspect of the definition is not appropriate. Although Thomas (2007) argues that Kuhn's meaning of paradigm is different to that which is usually adopted within educational research, it is argued that Kuhn's first point, which states that a paradigm represents an 'entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by members of a given community' does appear valid and more congruous to this research project.

The definition to be adopted throughout this project is that of Kuhn who states that a paradigm is the way that views, opinions and techniques are displayed and interpreted within the chosen research domain.

#### **4.5.1: Research paradigm: Interpretivism**

Taking this definition into account, the overall research paradigm, or research focus, adopted to address the aim of this study was to ascertain if factors in three different learning environment types for children aged 3-5 years, are associated with quality of their utterances and if so, the nature and effects of those factors, was interpretivism. Hammersley (2012) describes interpretivism as that which interprets the environment and actions of those who engage in the culture of that environment. Yin (2014:220) concurs with this and defines interpretivism as 'presenting the case from participant's multiple perspectives and meanings'.

Within an educational research context, interpretivist research can be associated with the concept that it produces an educative output (Stenhouse, 1974); that it must be, by its very nature, educative in the sense that it provides educational outputs. Educative outputs are, in this context, those that improve educational practice and ultimately impact on policy and practice (Hammersley, 2003). It is argued that research

should not be undertaken purely in order to produce knowledge for educationalists (Grant Rankin, 2019; Skilbeck, 1983). However, it could be asserted that by providing knowledge for educationalists then that can result in educational outputs. What Stenhouse is alluding to however, is more tangible results from interpretive research. In contradiction to this, Hammersley (2003) argues that research should not be educative, but instead should be informative and have the 'immediate and exclusive aim of producing knowledge, rather than anything else' (Hammersley, 2003:19). It could be argued that the overall aim of this research project was to inform others and, based on this information, provide an output that is educational. It could be argued that this could result in a change to the educational landscape, and therefore Stenhouse's assertion appears to have some relevance in this situation. Interpretivism is recognised as a research paradigm that encourages the researcher to be an onlooker, a spectator, instead of being fully immersed with those being studied (Hammersley, 2012). For this study I, as researcher, assumed a non-participant role so the freedom to assume this onlooker perspective was congruent and helpful. This approach contrasts with ethnography, which requires the researcher to become immersed within the research environments (Cohen *et al.*, 2002). Ethnography would not have been an appropriate approach for this research because in my role as researcher, I had no prior knowledge of the sample settings or the sample children.

#### **4.6: How the elements of the theoretical framework align**

Although each of the elements of the theoretical framework have been discussed individually above, it is necessary to consider how these elements align. The necessity to look at 'facts' *and* 'values' (Blaikie, 2007:183) was the aspect that was needed to ensure cohesion between the philosophical stance, the research paradigm and the language development framework. The knowledge focus of transcendental idealism (Kant, 1781) adopts the view that knowledge is gained through experience and that which is innately known, as does the view of the subject focus of interactionism (Tomasello, 2003), which assumes that

development is a combination of that which is learnt via interactions but also through which is innately inbuilt. Both these approaches then align with the research focus of interpretivism (Yin, 2004) which aims to interpret beliefs, values and opinions (Kuhn, 1970) but also, through the methods adopted, considered hard facts. These three elements therefore are interconnected and align in a way that form the theoretical framework in a cohesive manner.

#### **4.7: Overall methodological approach**

This project was undertaken using multiple case studies. Although it is recognised that case studies can be conducted using either a qualitative or quantitative approach (Gerring, 2006; Yin, 2014), this research was qualitative. This is seen by Stake (1995) as the natural option for those embarking on a case study. The qualitative approach was of particular relevance as I, as the researcher, was participating in the setting's activities whilst the research was being carried out, and was therefore involved within the environment (Stake, 2000). Hood (2006) states that it is unlikely that a research project will fit neatly within just one typology and this has been the difficulty with this research. The analysis of phase one data is based on views and opinions and therefore fits with qualitative paradigms neatly (Robson, 2011) and although the analysis of the findings in phase three is statistical, the emphasis is on the quality of the speech and therefore what the children say. O'Reilly *et al.* (2013) recognise that, although qualitative research does not tend to focus on statistics or data, there can exist an element of statistical analysis within the overall approach. Silverman (2013:9-10) agrees with O'Reilly *et al.* and asserts that although qualitative research tends to 'down-play statistical techniques', it should also be recognised that the 'research method should be chosen based on the specific task at hand'. It is asserted therefore that the qualitative approach is the most appropriate for this research.

A quantitative approach was discounted as the research was focussing on the context and the situation that the children were in. This was a crucial aspect of the research and it is argued that quantitative research does not necessarily provide opportunity for the context to be considered and does not allow for the depth of information regarding the environment and the children to be considered (O'Reilly *et al.*, 2013).

It could be argued that this project could have adopted the mixed method approach, or a multi-strategy design, using qualitative and quantitative methods 'separately, independently and concurrently' (Robson, 2011:165). However, this could result in fragmented and indistinct research (Mason, 2006). Bryman (2004) reports that integrating the findings, when undertaking a mixed method project, can become troublesome and results then become inconclusive.

Overall, when analysing all the factors, the qualitative approach was the most appropriate and was therefore adopted throughout all phases of the project.

#### **4.8: Research strategy**

As discussed in section 4.7, this research project was conducted using a qualitative approach. Nolan *et al.* (2013) assert that a qualitative approach is appropriate for use within naturalistic settings, which was the case for this project. A multiple case study was undertaken, with selected different environments where young children may learn, being the "cases", with the intention to compare different environments. The sections that now follow will discuss case studies, as a research strategy, further.

##### **4.8.1: Defining case studies**

Elliot and Lukes (2008) argue that defining case studies can be a difficult exercise which often results in continued uncertainty and they believe that case studies have been adopted by educational researchers who need an

approach that avoids the quantitative. This project adopted the qualitative approach, so it could be argued that this was the case in this instance. Yin (2014:18) states that 'case studies can cover multiple cases and then draw a single set of "cross-case" conclusions.' Nussbaum (1990:78) discusses the use of multiple cases in that they link together due to their similar nature, whilst at the same time not 'dispensing with their peculiarity'. Simons (1996) agrees with this concept and suggests that case studies celebrate the uniqueness of situations and contexts. This research necessitated a strategy that allowed the 'peculiarity' of each context to be considered, that is the different contexts and pedagogies of the settings, but at the same time was aiming to draw 'cross-case conclusions', whilst focusing on qualitative methods. As well the settings representing different cases, it is acknowledged that different categories of stakeholders were also within each case. It is therefore argued that a multiple case study was the most suitable for this project.

#### **4.8.2: Rationale**

MacDonald and Walker (1975) provide a rationale for selecting case study as a means of researching:

Case study is the way of the artist, who achieves greatness when, through the portrayal of an instant locked in time and circumstance, he communicates enduring truths about the human condition. For both the scientist and artist, content and intent emerge in form.

(MacDonald and Walker, 1975:3)

With regards to types of case studies, many different views and opinions exist on how they should be categorised; Stenhouse (1988) outlines four types (ethnographic, evaluative, educational and action research case studies), Yin (1993) explains three types of case study (exploratory, descriptive and explanatory) and Stake (1995) distinguishes between intrinsic and instrumental case studies. This variety illustrates the diversity of perspectives concerning the case study approach and indicates the need to be certain as to what approach should be adopted for this



particular study. For the purposes of this research it was decided not to follow any of the definitions outlined above, instead adopting Bassey's approach of 'theory-seeking and theory-testing case study' (1999:62). Bassey argues that this title speaks for itself, firstly seeking a theory and then testing it out, with one leading on from the other (Bassey, 1999). The process therefore aids the generalisability of the findings as the research has been tested throughout. Bassey asserts that this theory-seeking and theory-testing approach is a combination of Stake's intrinsic case study (1995) and Yin's descriptive case study (1993). It was felt that this approach was extremely appropriate for this research; being a phased approach was indeed seeking and then subsequently testing the theory, with one phase leading on from the other. This project was therefore founded on a theory-seeking and theory-testing multiple case study strategy.

It could be argued that narrative inquiry could have been a relevant approach to this study, that which is studying experiences as a story and thus gaining knowledge from people's experiences (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), however this approach would only truly apply to the first phase of this study. A narrative inquiry would not have fitted the overall research design and was therefore not felt to be appropriate in this instance. Equally, grounded theory could have been deemed as appropriate, as this approach is applied 'through a series of carefully planned steps, (to) develop theoretical ideas' (Crotty, 1998:78). This grounded theory approach assumes that theory is emergent and therefore was discounted as a theoretical approach of interactionism was adopted for this study and this made the case study approach appear more suitable and appropriate.

Yin (2014:13) states that a multiple case study 'relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion' and this is exactly what was needed for this phased approach study. A study using multiple methods and obtaining the data from a range of sources

required an approach that could accommodate this. This theory-seeking and theory-testing multiple case study strategy was that which was adopted for the project.

#### **4.8.3: Critique of multiple case study approach**

Although case studies are widely used, particularly in education, it is recognised that difficulties can occur when undertaking a multiple case study. A large quantity of data can be collected and this can become too burdensome for one researcher to deal with fittingly (Yin, 2014).

Contrastingly, Johnson and Christensen (2008:409) believe that by undertaking multiple case studies then this can dilute the process and becomes a 'depth versus breadth trade off'. It is argued that both of these issues may be found if undertaking small scale research. However, as this research was undertaken as a large-scale project it is asserted that these were not actually issues and the large quantity of data and the depth gained from each case was in fact an advantage of the study.

It is acknowledged that multiple case studies are regarded as being more robust than individual case studies (Yin, 2014; Stake, 1995; Stenhouse, 1979) and Stenhouse (1979) went so far as to say that a case study was only of use if the findings could be applied to other cases with similar attributes. By carefully selecting the cases within this research and ensuring that a range of attributes were present, it was the intention that detailed findings could be collated. The aim was then to utilise these detailed findings to consider generalisation.

If aiming for completely unbiased research, it could be argued that it is essential that a researcher remains completely objective throughout; that is not allowing any emotions or opinions to impact upon the research project. Yeo *et al.* (2014:200) suggest that remaining objective may be particularly difficult if the researcher is 'personally drawn to or involved in their research project'. It could be said therefore that it is never possible to remain objective – all researchers should be involved in their research projects and on this basis objectivity becomes the holy grail of the

research world. Because this research, based in the social sciences, was dealing with subjects, and not objects, it could be argued that this alone should be sufficient to rationalise the stance to take. Robson (2011:92) states that the desire to remain objective throughout a project can be both 'artificial' and 'lethal' when trying to make sense of a social situation. Considering that this research involved young children it is argued that there is a need to remain subjective throughout. Elfer (2006) states that it is essential to provide subjective responses to young children throughout research, as this develops a sense of connection, and therefore enhances the findings. This will be discussed further in the chapter on ethics (chapter 6), however is worth noting here as further rationale to the decision taken on this methodological approach.

Macmurray (1957:198-202) asserts that when undertaking a case study, two modes of reflection occur; 'intellectual reflection' and 'emotional reflection'. Elliott and Lukes believe that intellectual reflection implies that 'analytical distancing' (2008:94) is occurring and that emotional reflection implies an attempt to understand the situation through direct experience. It is argued that both of these aspects are necessary to undertake a case study research project that provides a complete picture of the situation. Simons (1996) believes that a researcher is able to be more scrupulous when they are able to engage their emotions as well as their intellect. This therefore lends itself towards a subjective stance throughout this research project.

It is argued that, through adopting the transcendental idealist philosophy, this is a subjective approach. This approach takes account of individual's personal feelings and emotions as well as the hard facts and this therefore is subjective. The same can be said for the research paradigm that was adopted throughout this study; interpretivism. It is therefore asserted that this needed me, as the researcher, to implement the same approach. By being aware of this subjectivity, and ensuring that it did not impact on

bias or validity (see 5.7 for more details regarding this), this was felt to be an appropriate stance to apply.

#### **4.8.4: Generalisability**

Although some acknowledge that case studies are not easily generalisable, due to the difficulty in replicating the study, and therefore cannot be relied upon to inform wider policy or practice (Stenhouse, 1979; Gilbert, 2008; Yin, 2014), it is argued that for this study this is not the case. Simons (1996:228) asserts that the paradox of the case study is such that 'by studying the uniqueness of the particular, we come to understand the universal'. Stake (1978) argues that generalisations from case studies can occur naturally and quite often it is the reader that makes these generalisations, rather than the researcher. It appears from this that there exists a natural desire to create generalisations from research and even if the researcher does not undertake this process explicitly, it is undertaken anyway at the point of digestion.

Stenhouse (1979) discusses the need for retrospective generalisations; that is looking back on the data findings from the case study and drawing conclusions, rather than entering the research phase with pre-conceived ideas and a hypothesis to prove. Stenhouse also was an advocate for using statistics alongside the qualitative data produced by a case study to make the findings appear more robust and replicable, making the case study a complimentary study rather than using it in isolation. He believes that case studies should not be restricted to words alone, but should have statistical data to add depth and meaning. Pole and Morrison (2003:9) agree with this concept, calling it 'inclusive ethnography' and assert the need for qualitative data within a quantitative study to assist generalisability. This research has done just that (see chapter 10) and it is argued that this therefore has taken steps to assist the generalisability of the multiple case study approach.

Whilst Popper (1963) argues that generalisation can only occur if the research can withstand all attempts at rebuttal, Bassey (1999:12) claims

that, within educational research, there are two kinds of generalisation; 'statistical generalisation' or 'fuzzy generalisations'. Statistical generalisation, he argues, is only possible when undertaking quantitative research and fuzzy generalisations apply when single studies are undertaken, and it becomes likely that the findings could be applied elsewhere. It is therefore asserted that this fuzzy generalisation did not apply to this research as, firstly, it contained a quantitative element and, secondly, it was undertaken as a multiple case study to assist with this generalisation issue.

#### **4.8.5: Concluding thoughts on case study approach**

Simons (1996:238) suggests that a researcher, using a case study, should 'challenge existing forms of knowing, through using different ways of seeing.' It has been recognised that case studies do not come without their problems, however being aware of these from the outset has assisted with this research process and, by undertaking this thoroughly and ethically, it is argued that a multiple case study was an ideal manner, in which 'existing forms of knowing' were challenged.

#### **4.9: Conclusion to methodology chapter**

Elliott and Lukes (2008:89) suggest that 'illuminative educational research will throw new light on familiar educational situations as opposed to throwing light on the unfamiliar' and the methodological approach that has been set out in this chapter attempts to do just that. It has set the scene as to how this light may illuminate the familiar in a new way. As Rallis and Rossman (2012:88) succinctly state: 'considering how you might implement the inquiry will recursively shape the what'. This chapter has discussed the 'how' and has asserted that transcendental idealism is the philosophical stance that is to be adopted throughout this project. This chapter has also discussed the theory-seeking and theory-testing multiple case study approach and, through analysing the criticisms of this approach, has asserted that this is fit for purpose. Having discussed the 'how', the following chapter will now discuss the 'what', by exploring the methods adopted and the implications of such methods.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Methodology chapter 2: Data collection**

#### **5.1: Introduction**

This chapter will discuss the research instruments chosen and discount alternatives. It will explore the benefits of a pilot study and will discuss sampling procedures. Although it is recognised in this chapter that validity and trustworthiness may be difficult to wholly evidence, it is asserted that by being transparent in the description throughout this chapter, this provides as much reliability as is possible. This will be further explained through this chapter and throughout the ethics chapter which follows.

#### **5.2: Context**

##### **5.2.1 : Context: macro**

This research was carried out in settings that had an early years unit, and that were based in England. All settings were therefore implementing the EYFS curriculum (Department for Education, 2017) and monitoring children alongside the milestones that this curriculum dictates. This English curriculum is statutory for all early years settings and provides a guide on how young children's learning and development should be encouraged and assessed. It provides practitioners with early learning goals; aspects which the child should be able to achieve by the end of their reception year at school. A child's early learning goal with regards to speaking, according to the EYFS, is that, at the end of the reception year they are able to:

...express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners' needs. They use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future. They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events.

(Department for Education, 2017:9)

It is argued that this early learning goal could be viewed subjectively and could be interpreted according to individual's perceptions and opinions. It was therefore of paramount importance throughout this research that, although practitioner's views were taken into account to get an overview of demographics, this interpretation could not be relied on as a comparative measure between settings. It was used solely to obtain an overview of each individual setting and the children therein.

The study locations were spread throughout the East Midlands area of England. This way it was not possible to make generalisations about demographics and is therefore necessary to provide more detailed contextual information below.

### **5.2.2: Context: study locations**

The participatory settings were selected in a way that fulfilled certain requirements. The requirements were that each setting followed the English early years curriculum, the EYFS (DfE, 2017), and that they used a FS site regularly. It was also important that no prior knowledge was held of the setting, the staff or the children who would be participants. This was so that it could be ensured that any prior knowledge of the setting could be limited before the research was undertaken, with the aim to remain as unbiased as possible. There was also a need that two of the settings were in rural locations and two in urban locations, and located in opposing social-class categories (NRS, 2014).

The settings were selected and had the characteristics shown in table 5.1 below:

Table 5.1: Characteristics of participant settings

	SETTING 1	SETTING 2	SETTING 3	SETTING 4
Method of selection	Purposive (Robson, 2011). Also convenience (Cohen <i>et al.</i> , 2002) as this setting volunteered following a research presentation.	Purposive (Robson, 2011).	Purposive (Robson, 2011).	Purposive (Robson, 2011).
Type of setting	Private day nursery – a chain of 2 settings.	Private day nursery – a chain of 10 settings.	Charity run pre-school	Private day nursery
Staff situation	Managed by a graduate, studying for MA. FS trained staff present at all times	Managed by a qualified teacher. Chain employs FS leaders/trainers who visit the setting once a week. Setting also has member of staff who is almost qualified as FS leader.	Managed by level 3 practitioner. One staff member currently training as FS leader	Managed by a graduate, studying for MA. FS leader, from Sweden, employed specifically to lead FS sessions
Latest Ofsted inspection rating	Outstanding	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding
Rural or urban?	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Social class category* (NRS, 2014)	E	A/B	A/B	E
Setting operation	Free flow between indoors and outdoors. Also option to attend outside provision only	Mixed age group (2-5) in one large room. No access to outdoors on free-flow basis. Outside space is accessed across a car park so all go in organised outing.	Free flow between indoors and outdoors.	Free flow between indoors and outdoors.
FS arrangements	Small FS on site and also walk to local forest site twice a week.	FS site is around a 10-minute walk from setting and is accessed once a week.	This setting accesses various FS sites, each with different features. One has a stream, one has large hills, and another is referred to as “the deep wood”	FS site is around a 20-minute walk from setting and is accessed once a week. The children often travel there by mini bus.

\*Footnote – social class A/B represents higher/intermediate managerial and professional occupations. Class E represents lowest grade workers/unemployed on state benefits



### 5.3: Phased approach to research instruments

As mentioned previously, the three phases planned for this research were as shown in table 5.2:

Table 5.2: Plan for phased approach and alignment to objectives and RQs

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Relevant objectives and RQs</b>	<b>Main activity</b>	<b>Research instruments</b>
One	Objectives 1, 2 RQ1, RQ2	Gather stakeholders' perspectives on (i) quality learning environments for young children and (ii) impact of environment on young children's utterances.	Semi-structured interviews
Two	Objective 3 RQ3	Develop and pilot a research-informed early learning environment quality framework, focused on SLD	Environment analysis and observation
Three	Objectives 2, 4, 5 RQ2, RQ4, RQ5	Describe, compare and evaluate factors of different learning environments and the quality of children's utterances within them to identify what constitutes a high-quality learning environment for young children's SLD	Environment analysis and observation

Before any research could be undertaken, ethical approval was gained from University of Northampton (appendix 1). The ethics is explored further in chapter 6. The methods for each phase will now be explained in further detail, adopting a phased approach to the exploration of instruments also, providing details of instruments used, the potential advantages and disadvantages, and the steps taken to overcome the discussed disadvantages.

## **5.4: Phase one**

The following explores phase one of the research process.

### **5.4.1: Phase one instruments: semi-structured interviews**

To gather stakeholders' views and opinions on what constitutes a high-quality learning environment, with focus on children's language development in the indoors and outdoors, as well as stakeholders' views concerning the impact of the environment on young children's utterances, and on their SLD, it was necessary to undertake semi-structured interviews (appendix 2).

Semi-structured interviews were selected as there needed to be some parameters and structure for the interview, to fully answer the research question, but still retain an element of flexibility to allow for expansion on the theme as needed (Cohen *et al.*, 2002). What was crucial when undertaking this phase of the research was the wording of the questions posed. Robson (2011:280) reports that beliefs are particularly difficult to obtain due to the fact that they are often 'complex and multi-dimensional and appear particularly prone to the effects of the question wording and sequence'. Robson (2011) goes on to suggest the use of scales to overcome these issues, however scales were consciously disregarded in this instance due to the fact that a decision was made not to provide any leading statements but instead to leave responses open to personal interpretation. It could be argued that the use of scales gives some parameters and could lead participants in their responses.

Although Atkinson and Coffey (2002) argue that interviews are, in-fact, over-used and there is an over dependence on this method to establish how the world is viewed, it was felt to be appropriate in this case. The interviews sought to obtain a detailed level of response and could also be used to probe deeper if needed. A questionnaire would not have provided this luxury. One thing to consider when undertaking interviews, Atkinson and Coffey (2002) argue, is that responses may not always be genuine, because of the view that interviews tend to be overused by researchers.

However, it is argued that genuine responses are more likely in an interview situation, rather than a focus group. Focus groups could have been undertaken. The advantage of this would have been that this could have assisted the participants who found it difficult to engage, due to reading/writing abilities or confidence in their opinions (Kitzinger, 1995). Saying that however, focus groups tend to provide a collective opinion, rather than opinions of the individuals (Sim, 1998) and what was needed throughout this phase of the project was a collection of opinions rather than a collective. It is recognised that when engaging in focus groups, participants can be influenced by others in the answers that they provide to questions, the hierarchy of an organisation can have an impact, and as such it becomes difficult to generalise to the wider population (Robson, 2011). As the responses in this phase did need to be generalisable, because they were needed to formulate the quality rating scale, focus groups were discounted.

#### **5.4.1.1: Pilot of interview questions**

Sampson (2004) asserts that it is essential that a pilot study is carried out in order that the quality of the research is not reduced and that data is produced that is analysable. Silverman (1993) recognises that it is paramount that each interviewee understands the interview questions in the same way. In contradiction to this, Silverman goes on to acknowledge that respondents should be given the opportunity to demonstrate their unique views and opinions on a topic (1993). It was the intention of this research that respondents had the opportunity to demonstrate their unique views, however, it is acknowledged that interview questions can be misinterpreted and 'not all people are equally articulate and perceptive' (Creswell, 2009:179). As a result, the decision was made to pilot the interview questions before administering them to the sample participants. Because of the acknowledgement that all have different abilities, it was decided to pilot to two people from each category of "experts", parents, practitioners and children. The participants for this pilot were selected on the basis of convenience and due to the fact that

they were easy to access and within geographical proximity, which Yin (2014) states can be the main criteria for selection at this stage. However, certain criteria still needed to be met, in that the stakeholders and the children needed to have some knowledge of a FS/NE as this then had a correlation with the overall research question.

It was hoped that this pilot would give an overview on the questions used and enable any confusion in questions, or ambiguity, to be resolved. Although some argue that contamination is not a great concern within qualitative studies (Holloway, 1997) due to the fact that data collection could be seen as progressive and that interviewers naturally adjust their interviewing style as the research is underway (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001), it was important in this instance that a pilot was undertaken to prepare the interviewer as much as possible and ensure that the data collected was valuable. It is argued that this, in itself, is an ethical responsibility of the researcher. Contamination from the pilot was avoided by not including the data collected in the main results and ensuring the participants in the pilot were then not included in the main study also (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001).

Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) go on to assert that there exists an ethical responsibility to the participants of the pilot, and that the results from that aspect of the research are reported on. In this vein, it is noted that the pilot found that some questions were worded in a way that caused confusion and therefore wording was adapted to make these questions clearer (appendix 3). Also, at this stage, it was discovered that the questionnaire approach was not suitable for the use with children. The children questioned lost interest quickly and their responses were, at times, fantastical in nature, with one respondent stating that, when asked what would make his environment good, he "would have a hedge trimmer then [I] could cut your eyes and your nose" (excerpt from pilot interview transcript – appendix 4). This indicated that they did not fully understand what was being asked of them or they were uneasy. However, Von Benzon (2015) would argue that these kinds of responses should not be regarded as 'failures in the research process' (2015:330) and instead be considered as valuable to the research process. What is poignant to note

however is Von Benzon makes this assertion with regards to teenage participants and it is argued that when researching with young children this may be a different concept all together. In the next chapter (chapter 6) there is extensive discussion around the ethics of this study, and it is asserted that continual reflection is necessary to adapt the research process should the children show discomfort or unease. Palaiologou (2014) states that researchers should continually challenge their own research methods 'without fearing that this will reduce the viability and validity of the research or children's participation' (2014:702) and this is what happened at this pilot stage of this phase of the research project.

My extensive practice knowledge led me to feel that the children were uncomfortable with the structure of the interview process and due to this an alternative method of questioning was adopted. A large picture of an empty nursery, garden and natural space was used as a prompt and placed on a table with some pens. I sat with the picture and if children approached the table I said "I want to make the best nursery in the world and don't know what to put in it or do – could you tell me what I need to do to make this nursery the best one ever??" The question was also asked "how would you feel if you could play in this nursery?" and responses were noted. Children accessed pens and drew in the spaces what they thought the best nursery should have, talking about their representations. This method of pedagogical documentation, was asking the children to engage with the technicalities of drawing as well as to communicate their views, but at pilot stage this appeared to be successful and generated thoughtful responses. These responses required noting and were added to this collaborative piece of art work as they were given. Rinaldi (2012) advocates the use of children's drawings for this kind of research and states:

As children communicate their mental images or theories to others, they also represent them to themselves, developing a more conscious vision. This is what 'internal listening' means. By moving from one language to another, and one field of experience

to another, and by reflecting on these shifts, children modify and enrich their theories.

(Rinaldi, 2012:237)

#### **5.4.1.2: Sampling for phase one**

A purposive sampling technique (Robson, 2011) was used to select four settings. Each setting was asked to select four parents, four practitioners and whichever children within the 3 -5 age range who had, and gave, consent to take part. The aim was to match the purposive sampling design for the settings across all phases so that there was a consistency in samples and the results could therefore be combined and collaborated.

As phase three intended to sample settings across various demographic categories (see section 5.2.2 for further details) it was essential that phase one participants were sampled in the same way. It was therefore necessary to ensure that stakeholders from both rural and urban backgrounds were selected as well as those from various social class categories (NRS, 2014). It was also essential that all participants were representing views and opinions based on the curriculum and pedagogical approaches throughout England. It is recognised that views regarding quality of early years may differ in different countries and contexts and these opinions may not have cultural relevance to the early years context in England. It is important that these sentiments were reflective of the context in which this project was situated, and this was therefore a consideration in this case.

It was important that children's views were included in this phase. Clark and Moss (2001) argue that children are most likely to give more reliable answers than adults, to questions that concern them. Gallagher and Gallagher (2008:501) allege that 'children are better placed to know about childhood than adults' and it was this ideology that was utilised within this phase.

A range of "experts" were also selected, in line with their area of expertise. The demographics of these "experts" were as indicated in table 5.3:

Table 5.3: Demographics of “expert” participants

<b>Expert No</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Method of selection</b>	<b>Reason for sampling</b>
Expert one	FS trainer	Purposive	Previously a nursery practitioner. Trained as FS trainer. Extensive knowledge on environments.
Expert two	FS trainer	Convenience – when expert one became involved, expert two was extremely keen to also be interviewed – ethically it would have been wrong to decline	Previously a nursery practitioner. Trained as FS trainer. Extensive knowledge on environments.
Expert three	Renowned author on communication within early years environments	Purposeful – email sent to seek participation	Authors books and produces resources to aid communication within early years environments
Expert four	Recently trained Ofsted inspector	Purposeful - email sent to seek participation	Government perspective on HQEs and how they assist communication
Expert five	SL therapist	Purposeful - email sent to seek participation	Perspective of one trained specifically in aiding young children’s SLD

The sampling within this phase was not without its difficulties. It proved very problematic to recruit settings who were willing to participate and, although only four settings were needed, it took requests to three times this many settings (n=12) before participants were sourced. It is acknowledged that this can be a common difficulty, particularly when respondents do not see any personal benefit to becoming involved in a project that can potentially be very time consuming (Van Maanen, 1991). After investigation, it was noted that literature indicates that the motivation to participate in research, at a collective level, is driven by the desire to inform change, by political representation and to receive recognition (Clark, 2010). This literature was used within the initial approach to seek participant interest. Emails were sent that included the benefits of participating (appendix 5) and this then resulted in obtaining the number of participants required for the study.

#### **5.4.2: Analysis of phase one**

Silverman (2017) argues that a naturalist approach to data analysis combines elements of positivism (which looks at the facts) and romanticism (which focuses on the experience). It could be argued that this is similar to Kant's (1781) transcendental idealism whereby knowledge is gained through what is known and what is innately felt. It is therefore asserted that the theoretical stance adopted throughout this project, that of transcendental idealism (Kant, 1781) is that which remained appropriate at this stage of data analysis. Interview responses were analysed based on participants' opinions of what they knew and also of what they felt to be quality, and this was therefore considered at this stage.

Thematic analysis of the interview data was undertaken (appendix 6) and the themes used to construct the quality rating scale. This involved 'seeking patterning of responses' (Cohen *et al.*, 2002:82) and analysing these patterns accordingly. NVIVO was the system used to assist and document this inductive reasoning once transcriptions had been made.



Inductive reasoning, where patterns are 'formulated by drawing general inferences from particulars or cases of empirical data' (McAbee *et al.*, 2017:278), was felt to be appropriate as the semi-structured interviews had given a range of opinions, based on no pre-conceived ideas. Sections 8.2 and 8.3 discuss this coding further. With regards to the transcriptions, it should be noted that although services were available to assist with transcribing, and this would have saved a great deal of time, it was felt to be necessary that the interviews should be transcribed without assistance (appendix 7). This resulted in being fully familiar with the data and being able to identify recurring themes as the transcription process was underway (Robson, 2011). Gray (2018) asserts that, by utilising a software programme such as NVIVO to assist with data analysis, this can make the analysis process more transparent and therefore aids credibility. Although this was found to be the case, utilising this software was not without its difficulties. This software package was useful in the way that it could recall excerpts from transcriptions all related to particular nodes (Saldana, 2016), although it was not as useful as originally perceived. This aligns with the views of Gallagher (2007:71) who states that coding software is 'effective for data management but inadequate for the nuanced and complex work of data analysis'. When coding at a basic level this system was practical, however when wanting to analyse the data in more detail this posed problems. The sources of data were all uploaded and coded appropriately. It was then necessary to categorize the data, into parents' perspectives, practitioners' perspectives, children's perspectives and "experts'" perspectives. The NVIVO software would not oblige and it was therefore necessary to create four new data sets to be able to filter and categorize the results (appendix 8).

It was then necessary to tabulate and theme these nodes manually also, as again NVIVO did not have the complexity required to join nodes together (appendix 9). The advantage of this difficulty was that it enabled a real depth of knowledge to emerge from the data. It is recognised that allowing software programmes to code can mean a sense of detachment from the data (Silver and Lewins, 2014) so this was not necessarily a

negative aspect, although it did mean that it was a time-consuming exercise due to the amount of data collected.

Photographs of the children's drawings were also uploaded into NVIVO and coded alongside the other data sets. No interpretation of the drawings was needed as the children had been explaining their drawings whilst they were doing them, and notes had been written alongside the drawings. It was therefore a simple process to code the aspects within the drawings in the same way that the responses from adults had been coded.

NVIVO therefore served a purpose within this research project, albeit a small one, but ultimately the manual processing of the data was the best method to gain the required outcomes. NVIVO was not intuitive enough and was not a substitute for the manual process of coding.

An aspect of the ethical considerations within this project, was that an option was given to participants to see the findings of the study (appendix 10). It was realised however that the time span between this first phase and completion of the project would be quite lengthy and, secondly, the participants would probably not want to digest the whole thesis. It was therefore necessary to provide a synopsis of the findings, and a report was produced (appendix 11) and sent to each setting for distribution to the participants. A blog was considered as a method of information dissemination as this is becoming a more widely used form of communication (Powell *et al.*, 2011), however this may have impacted on the findings. Participants may have adapted behaviour based on what they perceived from this ongoing update. A report was therefore considered most appropriate.

## **5.5: Phase Two**

### **5.5.1: Phase two instruments: pilot of quality framework and observation**

Information gleaned from the thematic analysis (appendix 6) of the phase one interviews was used to develop a new early learning environment

quality framework (appendix 12), with specific focus on SLD. This framework was then trialled within a pilot study for which outcomes informed the sampling strategy that was adopted for phase three. The pilot was also a trial for data collection and data analysis concerned with the quality of young children's utterances in different learning environments.

#### **5.5.1.1: Sampling within phase two**

The pilot study was conducted in an early years setting which educates and cares for children of mixed social economic status from both rural and urban backgrounds, to ensure that the participants derived from a diverse demographic background.

This pilot invited the participation of all children in the pilot setting for whom parental consent had been given, so that it was possible to use pilot findings to ascertain what final sampling procedures should be adopted for Phase Three. This pilot, and the results of such, is documented within chapter 8.

### **5.6: Phase three**

#### **5.6.1: Phase three instruments: environment evaluation and observation**

The objectives of phase three were (i) describing, comparing and evaluating factors of different learning environments in selected settings, according to the new framework and (ii) describing and comparing the quality of children's utterances within different learning environments.

##### **5.6.1.1: Evaluation of different learning environments**

To describe, compare and evaluate the learning environments, the newly devised quality framework (appendix 12) was administered. The purpose of using this framework was to ensure that the different

environments; the NE, the OC and the IC, within each setting were compared in a consistent manner.

Because of this need for consistency I, as the researcher, administered this framework in each setting and in each environment. By adopting this approach this ensured that all environments were looked at from a similar viewpoint, with the aim of remaining consistent throughout. It could be argued that it would have been more appropriate for the framework to have been completed by an individual who was more familiar with the environment, although this could have provided a biased view and it may have been difficult for those with a connection to the setting to remain unbiased. When administering the quality framework, I was distanced from the participants, the setting, and therefore able to remain less biased throughout. To further reduce any bias, an independent person was also trained, by myself, to administer the framework and these two results were then compared and an overall rating applied to the setting. This independent assessor, or research assistant, was a manager of a "good" setting, qualified at level 5, and therefore had extensive practice knowledge. It was important for the study that we both had a comparable amount of practice wisdom on which to base our assessment.

It could be argued that it was not possible for a complete picture of the setting to be gained, as this framework was completed by those who were not immersed within the culture of the setting. It could also be asserted that the setting may have made improvements to their environment in order to make an impression, as those assessing were not normally in attendance. This could be compared to the Hawthorne effect (Dickson and Roethlisberger, 2003), where the presence of an observer influences behaviours. To overcome this, the framework was administered during the last session of observation, at the end of the three-week period, in the hope that this would provide a fuller picture and reduce the Hawthorne effect. It was hoped that by administering the rating scale in the final week that the observation would be more natural and the setting would

feel more acclimatised to an observer being present. It was therefore more likely to be a more valid assessment of the environment.

#### **5.6.1.2: Analysis of children's utterances**

Audio observations were undertaken at each visit and analysed by using Type/Token Ratio (TTR) analysis to assess the quality of utterances, or lexical diversity, of children's speech. One of the most straightforward ways of measuring lexical diversity is by simply counting the number of different words (NDW) that are spoken in a specific sample (Miller, 1991) although it is argued that this measure is not universally applicable. NDW does not assess quality of speech because it does not consider the type of utterances, rather counting total number of words (TNW). TNW is associated with talkativeness (Owen and Leonard, 2002) and the aim of this research was not to analyse how much children talk, but rather the quality of what they said.

When researching the quality of speech, TTR analysis is extensively used and widely recognised as an appropriate tool for assessing SL (Fairbanks, 1944; Johnson, 1944; Richards, 1987). Speech and language therapists (SLTs) recommend this method as a fairly simple means of assessing quality of speech, which measures the range of vocabulary (Laing-Gillam and Justice, 2010). TTR analysis involves counting the NDW and compares to TNW, which provides a ratio that indicates the lexical diversity within the given sample (Richards, 1987). The larger the TTR then the greater variety of language used and the less repetition of words. Alternative assessment tools do exist, to analyse the quality of spoken language, such as the Reynell Developmental Language Scales (RDLS), and the Vocabulary Diversity (VOCD) model, however I did not use these as the administration of such assessments requires a much more specific expertise than that needed for TTR application (Ball, 1999). Qualified SLTs are better positioned to administer RDLS and this was beyond the realms of my experience. Also, TTR analysis had been administered successfully in the past, after receiving training from an SLT on its

application (Richardson and Murray, 2016), and this was therefore deemed to be a reliable and a manageable data analysis tool.

Laing-Gillam and Justice (2010) allege that TTR analysis can be restrictive as the language samples do not effectively monitor a child's development over any period of time. However, this was not a concern throughout this research project, as the objective was not to track development over a long period of time but more to compare environments, over a short period. Additionally, Richards and Malvern (2000) argue that TTR is not relevant when comparing studies between researchers as the TNW can differ between studies. As this was a case study it was not necessary to compare the results to other researchers' findings; just comparisons within this study were important. Both these criticisms of TTR were therefore not regarded as restrictions for this project.

Alternative language assessment tools, specific to children in the early years, do exist, however these were discounted for various reasons. Blank *et al.* (1978) devised a tool that measured complexity of young children's speech, however this concentrated solely on language used in questions, and how children responded to questions that were asked by their class teacher. This was not suitable for this research project because it is recognised that when children are questioned this both restricts their speech to short and limited vocabulary and also puts pressure on children which, in turn, can impact on confidence with SL (Siraj-Blatchford and Manni, 2008). The aim of this project was that children were observed in naturalistic situations and the concept of questioning was contradictory to this aim.

The purpose of utilising TTR was to analyse the lexical diversity of a child's speech and this aligns with the research question "What constitutes a high-quality learning environment with regards to SLD for young children and how do factors in the learning environment influence the quality of utterances made by young children?" In order to capture audio observations of the children's speech, to enable the quality of the speech

to be analysed, it was necessary to equip each child with a recording device and leave the devices recording throughout the whole session. A sample of the recording was then selected by choosing a point to start listening at random and transcribing verbatim (appendix 13). Each vignette of recording was then analysed (appendix 14). The rationale behind the recording being undertaken throughout the whole session was that the children would not be influenced by the presence of the recording devices, they would forget about their existence, and the results would therefore not be impacted upon as a result. The sampling procedure of the vignettes for analysis is discussed further below, in section 5.6.2.

The audio observations were undertaken by adopting an 'ecological approach' (Fawcett, 1996:13); alternatively known as the 'naturalistic approach.' It was possible to gain contextual information by adopting the role of 'observer as participant' (Johnson and Christensen, 2008:214) and by being present at each "observation". Field notes were also kept at each observation (appendices 15, 16, 17 and 18) to record this contextual information for analysis if needed. Rinaldi (2005:20) asserts that listening to children involves 'listening not just with our ears, but with all our senses (sight, touch, smell, taste, orientation)' and by being present and keeping field notes this deep level of 'listening' could be undertaken. These field notes recorded points such as the weather, any particular instructions given by the lead practitioner, any factors that changed the dynamics of the session and anything else that was thought to be potentially important throughout the session. The purpose of these field notes was also to record data such as whether activities were child-led, adult-led or otherwise. By collecting detailed contextual information, it was possible to record and analyse speech affordances. Ayala (2016:881) describes these affordances as the 'significance of the coupling between organism and environment' and it was crucial that the purpose of the children's speech and how this was influenced by what was occurring was recorded, by way of note taking, alongside the audio recordings.

This ecological approach enabled the research to be undertaken in a manner that was easier to remain unbiased (Mukherji and Albon, 2010)

although Robson (2011) argues that this is difficult to achieve completely as the nature of the research results in attendance over a number of weeks, leading automatically to a situation of involvement and familiarity. Although I attended each session where observations were undertaken, the lead practitioner, the trusted adult, was tasked with equipping the children with their recording devices initially, with the aim of keeping the children reassured and comfortable. O'Reilly *et al.* (2013) assert the need for children to assent to being party to research, and by involving the lead practitioner in this process and explaining the research, the children were able to display assent and engage in the research happily. The ethical considerations of this aspect of the research are discussed further in chapter 6.

Body cameras were the observation tool of choice as they were felt to be the least obtrusive and would therefore provide the most reliable data. My previous research in this area had used audio recording devices (Richardson and Murray, 2016) and had caused problems with regards to the obtrusiveness of the devices. Although it is recognised that any device that is utilised will have an element of obtrusiveness, body cameras were the least noticeable; there are no wires restricting play and by using chest harnesses children's play could continue unaffected. Mukherji and Albon (2010:114) recognise that data collection by using recording devices or cameras can result in data that are counterfactual because children may act 'differently' due to the presence of the device. It was important for this research that children's speech was as naturalistic as possible and that it remained unaffected by the observation procedure. To ensure that the children were acclimatised to the body cameras, a pilot was undertaken, and the cameras were fitted and set to record but the data were not utilised in the research. This habituation was to aid the children with the idea of the cameras being utilised, to ensure that the reliability of the data was enhanced and also to erase any technical complications at outset (Bell, 2007). Each camera was numbered and allocated to the same child each week to enable patterns to be identified if need be.



Free standing video cameras were discounted as a tool for observation, as the children's speech would have been more difficult to capture and subsequently this would impact on the ability to analyse this speech quality accurately. For the same reason narrative observations were disregarded as a viable option. Both free standing video recorders and a narrative observation method would also have been more conspicuous for the children and may have affected the accuracy of the data analysis (Nolan *et al.*, 2013). Body cameras were therefore regarded to be the most appropriate observation tool. Mukherji and Albon (2010) assert that cameras can provide a researcher with little contextual detail of an observation. This was noted and resolved by being present when the recordings were carried out and by maintaining copious field notes (appendices 15, 16, 17 and 18).

Once the samples from each child were selected, they were then transcribed verbatim (appendix 13) and the TTR was calculated (an example of such can be seen in appendix 14). This resulted in an overall TTR being obtained for each child in each environment. It was then possible to compare children and compare environments, and to establish whether the SL quality was different and if so in what ways.

By using these TTR findings, alongside the results from the newly devised quality rating scale, it was the intention to gain an overview of the children's language ability within different environments and answer the research question "What constitutes a high-quality learning environment with regards to SLD for young children and how do factors in the learning environment influence the quality of utterances made by young children?"

### **5.6.2: Sampling within phase three**

The settings included within this phase, shown in table 5.4, were purposively selected as it was required that they possessed the following attributes:

Table 5.4: Phase three sampling

	<b>SETTING 1</b>	<b>SETTING 2</b>	<b>SETTING 3</b>	<b>SETTING 4</b>
Demographics	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Social Class Category * (NRS, 2014)	E	A/B	A/B	E
Requirements for inclusion	Access to FS as part of current routines	Access to FS as part of current routines	Access to FS as part of current routines	Access to FS as part of current routines
No of children	12	12	12	12

\*Footnote – social class A/B represents higher/intermediate managerial and professional occupations. Class E represents lowest grade workers/unemployed on state benefits

There was deliberation over whether the participant settings within this phase should be the same settings as those within the first phase, or different settings. A SWOT (Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) was undertaken (appendix 19) to assist in this decision-making process. It was identified that by using the same setting within each phase some of the benefits would be that it would be likely that I would be remembered by setting/children if returning and observations could therefore be more naturalistic, and the difficulty of sourcing participants would not be repeated at phase three as was experienced within phase one. Because of the results of this SWOT analysis it was decided that the same settings should be used for the whole research process.

The settings identified were visited, each setting for three weeks, in line with setting requirements. This meant that there was no pattern to visits, although each setting was visited three times within the space of several months. This irregular visit pattern helped to ensure that other variables, such as settling in periods and the weather were minimised. An extra week per setting was also timetabled in case of need. The lead practitioner from each setting was asked to select twelve children who would be happy to be part of the research process and the demographics of the participants are detailed below. It was important that the sample

was representational of the class demographics, and this was achieved, and again shown in table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Demographics of child participants in phase three

	SETTING 1	SETTING 2	SETTING 3	SETTING 4
No of male participants	8	5	8	3
No of female participants	3	4	7	5
No of participants exceeding S & L milestones*	4	0	8	2
No of participants as expected for S & L milestones*	3	9	4	6
No of participants emerging within S & L milestones*	4	0	3	0
Overall group numbers	13	16	18	13
Overall boy/girl split	9/4	9/7	9/9	6/7
Overall class statistics for S & L milestones*	Out of all of the children in the group: 4 are emerging 5 are as expected 4 are exceeding For SL milestones	Out of all of the children in the group: 2 are emerging 12 are as expected 2 are exceeding For SL milestones	Out of all of the children in the group: 3 are emerging 4 are as expected 11 are exceeding For SL milestones	Out of all of the children in the group: 1 is emerging 9 are as expected 3 are exceeding For SL milestones

\*Footnote – S & L milestones as per EYFS curriculum (DfE, 2017). 'Emerging', 'expected' and 'excelling' are the descriptors given in the EYFS for indicating what stage children are at in a specific area of development (DfE, 2016:15)

The lead practitioner selected the children, taking account of their current levels of SL skills, and had selected across the developmental range, in order that all levels of skill were accounted for (O'Reilly *et al.*, 2013). It is acknowledged that questions can be raised over the reliability of progress data from schools and how teachers assess children's developmental progress (Roberts-Holmes and Bradbury, 2016). This was, however, not a limitation in this instance as the overall aim of obtaining the developmental milestone data was purely to indicate that a range of development was covered in the study. No stipulation was set that this sample should not include children with English as an additional language (EAL) or special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). The demographics of the setting needed to be represented accurately, in order that results could be more easily generalised and that it constituted a 'valid sample' (Cohen *et al.*, 2002:98). It was therefore recognised that the participants could indeed be those with EAL or SEND and no restrictions to participation should be introduced. It could be argued that the lead practitioner selecting the children could have included some bias and hence some restrictions; they could have selected based on who they thought would paint the setting in a good light, however this was a negligible risk and not something that could be measured or therefore protected against. This process was therefore felt to be the best option.

As previously mentioned, children's speech was captured by use of a recording device and a sample of their speech was selected, starting at indiscriminate points in the recording, for data analysis. Selection of the samples was made in a manner that ensured that the beginning and the end of the recording was avoided. It was acknowledged that it was likely that these times were when children may have been undertaking an aspect of a transition period and therefore could have had their SL interrupted or impacted upon. It is recognised that horizontal transitions throughout a child's day should be avoided (Vogler *et al.*, 2008), these times when children move from one area or activity to another, and by avoiding analysis of communication at the beginning or the end of the recording it was the aim that the children were as "natural" as possible in

their situation, and that the re-acclimatisation to their surroundings had occurred.

Similar previous research that I undertook using TTR (Richardson and Murray, 2016) had selected random samples of five minutes in length for analysis. However, further reflection indicated this would not have been the best way forward for this research. Owen and Leonard (2002) report that the larger the sample the lower the TTR is likely to be. Also, it could be argued that using a timed sample means this is not an equal comparison. Some children may say very little within a five-minute period, particularly if engrossed in solitary play, whereas others may talk incessantly. It is argued therefore, that this time sampling may not provide comparable data. Templin (1957) recommends that to accommodate these issues, a standard number of utterances should be analysed. Johnson (1944) calls this mean segmental type-token ratio (MSTTR). For this research it was therefore decided to analyse a sample that included 50 words, in line with Miller (1981) and Klee (1992). Miller (1981) found that MSTTR analysis of 50 word samples provides a yield of around 0.45, irrespective of age, when children are between the ages of three to eight years old and Klee (1992) reported similar findings for children between the ages of two and four. This gave a comparative figure for when analysing the data from different environments in this research project. Although Owen and Leonard (2002) suggest that this method could exclude children who do not utter this TNW, this was not the case for this research as the cameras were running for whole sessions (up to 3 hours at a time) so it was therefore more likely that 50 words would be spoken throughout this elongated period. Samples were therefore analysed, by using 50 words from the recorded data.

### **5.6.3: Analysis of phase three**

When all SL data were collected it was necessary to analyse and interpret the information, always ensuring confidentiality and data protection protocols were adhered to (BERA, 2018; EECERA, 2014). The data

findings that were collated, and are detailed in chapter 9, have been assembled in a way that is both transparent and ethical. The analysis methods were undertaken in line with the training delivered by the speech and language therapist (SLT), each vignette of language was transcribed and then TTR analysis was applied (appendix 14). The Google dictionary facility was used, for ease and simplicity of application, to categorise words for analysis to ensure consistency. The TTR was then calculated, rounded up to one decimal point, and these figures were then compared and contrasted across the different environments and the different children. Credibility is viewed as achievable if the data have been fully understood and interpreted correctly (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and selected samples of this calculation were verified by an SLT to ensure that this calculation was being applied correctly.

### **5.7: Validity, reliability, bias and trustworthiness**

The traditional concept of validity within qualitative research is defined as how relatable the research is to the particular area studied (Eisner and Peshkin, 1990). Based on this definition it could be argued that this relates to the generalisability of a study and this has been discussed in depth in the previous chapter. Cho and Trent (2006:320) however, assert validity is more than this and that one should adopt a 'transactional approach' to validity; one which involves participants checking data and involves triangulation. Shenton (2004) asserts that trustworthiness is enhanced in qualitative research when this process is adopted, resulting in valid and reliable data. Although some would argue that validity and reliability are only possible within quantitative research (Winter, 2000), Creswell asserts that 'validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research' (2009:191) as the findings tend to be checked for accuracy by the researcher and the participants. Through thorough checking and consultation with the participants it is argued that this transactional validation has occurred throughout the project.

To further ensure validity and reliability, TTR analysis was undertaken and an SLT was then consulted to confirm that this analysis has been carried

out accurately. Data were collected over three separate weeks to ensure that a range of data were available for analysis, and it was not just a snapshot observation which could have resulted in over generalisation. The data were also collected over a short-time frame, over a maximum of five weeks (setting two), so that children's developmental progress had minimum impact on the findings. Yin (2014) acknowledges that, when undertaking a case study, anticipated developmental achievement can impact upon findings. The case studies in this research project were carried out over a short period of time to allow for this and ensure that findings were minimally impacted on as a result. Creswell (2009) asserts that validity can be achieved in instances such as this, by the researcher spending a prolonged period of time within the research setting. As I aimed to be present on every occasion that speech recordings were made, and provided contextual field notes alongside each audio recording, it could be argued that this was the case. Creswell goes so far as to say 'the more experience the researcher has with participants in their actual setting, the more accurate or valid will be the findings' (2009:191)

At the end of the time spent within each setting, the quality rating scales were completed. This was done without discussion with the lead practitioner of each setting, intentionally, to minimise bias from those who are immersed in the environment. It is recognised that when being fully immersed within an environment, this can impact on the way such an environment is viewed and analysed (Harms *et al.*, 2005), and this was therefore considered and the rating scale applied without consultation. Ogden (2008) argues that potential bias exists at the point that a research topic is selected and as such all aspects of the research methodology are in danger of being affected by such bias. Bias was still present when I, as the researcher, applied the rating scales, as I undertook this analysis at the end of the observation period. It could be argued that by this time I had developed pre-conceived notions (Flyvberg, 2006), by becoming familiar with the setting, and those in it, and this could impact on the way that the quality of the environment was viewed, either positively or negatively. To minimise this bias, the rating scale was devised in a way that was factual and once completed was discussed with

those in the setting to confirm findings. A research assistant completed this rating scale alongside me (see 5.6.1.1) to aid with minimising bias. Lichtman (2010) asserts that although bias is difficult to eradicate completely, it can be controlled by using a range of methods and through triangulation. Even if it was possible to eliminate bias, I argue that it may not have been desirable to do so, as I needed to value the subjective realities of the participants' perspectives (Yin, 2014).

The issue of the methodology and methods of this study being replicable remained of paramount importance to enhance trustworthiness and reliability (Given, 2008; Yin, 2014). The level of detail of the systematic research design, provided throughout this chapter and through the addition of detailed appendices, is hoped to provide the information required to duplicate the process of this study if required. Patton acknowledges (1999:1207) that set patterns should not be adhered to, neither should rules set by other parties, in order to achieve overall reliability. Instead he asserts that this be achieved by 'credibility, competence and perceived trustworthiness of the qualitative researcher.' It is argued that the characteristics of Patton's model are immeasurable and are therefore requiring further clarification, hence the need for rules and guidelines. It is argued that by carrying out this project in an ethical, transparent, and replicable manner, and adhering to rules and guidelines, then this is what ensures validity and trustworthiness, along with triangulation.

## **5.8: Triangulation**

Silverman (2017:387) states that triangulation refers 'to the attempt to get a true fix on a situation' and this can be undertaken through method and data triangulation. Although it is acknowledged that this 'true fix' is likely to be not possible within a case study (Yin, 2014), triangulation was still necessary to aid validity (Gray, 2018). Robson (2011) argues that triangulation is the way in which all threats to validity can be countered. Therefore, to strive for data triangulation, the overall project used analysis of both voice recordings and analysis of the environment using the newly devised quality rating scale. Robson (2011) acknowledges that



by undertaking multiple methods of data collection this can enhance validity, however at the same time it can, conversely, make direct comparisons problematic. By carrying out this research and by collecting data in the ways documented, the aim was not to make a direct comparison of the data but instead to use the information gleaned alongside each other – as a compliment rather than comparison.

Patton (2002:556) asserts that it is possible to undertake a 'triangulation of sources' and thus encourages a comparison of findings across different times and using different cases. This research project did ensure that this triangulation of sources was undertaken and ultimately it was the intention to provide as detailed an 'account of the area of study as is possible' (Mukherji and Albon, 2010:194). By aiming for triangulation, alongside the validity and reliability considerations, it was the aim that this was achieved.

It is also recognised that it is possible to triangulate by cross referencing and referring back to the literature review chapters (Denzin, 1989). This can result in any findings being related to theory and current research (Creswell and Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004) and this process is undertaken in the discussion chapters (chapters 8 and 10).

## **5.9: Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the phased approach to instrument design and analysis, to answer the research question "what constitutes a high-quality learning environment with regards to development for young children and how do factors in the learning environment influence the quality of utterances made by young children?". Interviews and audio observations were arguably the most appropriate methods for data collection for this study. It is also argued throughout this chapter that the design and undertaking of this research is such that this project was carried out in a manner that is both replicable and trustworthy.

The chapter that now follows discusses the ethical considerations of this research project.

# Chapter 6

## Ethical considerations

### 6.1: Introduction

It is recognised that, when undertaking research that involves children, specific focus is needed on the ethical considerations due to the perception that children have a vulnerability in two ways (O'Reilly *et al.*, 2013). Firstly, O'Reilly *et al.* argue, children have a vulnerability as a result of their weakness in their limited knowledge and in their physicality and, secondly, they become vulnerable due to their lack of power in the economic and political world. As this research was centred around young children, the ethical considerations need in depth exploration and consideration and this chapter therefore sets out to undertake this detailed exploration.

Dickson and Roethlisberger (2003) recognise that there is no such thing as no impact when undertaking research. What is shown throughout this chapter is the fact that this is recognised and all possible actions were undertaken in order to keep this impact to a minimum. Nutbrown (2010:11) argues that just to protect participants is insufficient and that a culture of 'caring, vigilance, sensitivity and fidelity' should be adopted throughout any project. This project strived for this level of care and at the forefront of this research remained the concept that:

The lives and stories that we hear and study, are given to us under a promise, that promise being that we protect those who have shared them with us.

(Denzin, 1989:83)

The chapter therefore discusses how this protection was provided to all participants and the considerations that were needed to ensure that this protection was thorough and present throughout.

## **6.2: General ethical considerations when researching with young children**

As mentioned above, children have a vulnerability in research that is important to both acknowledge and protect against. It is suggested (Nolan *et al.*, 2013) that children should be acknowledged as having the same rights and protection that is afforded to adults. Christensen and Prout (2002:482) refer to this as 'ethical symmetry', meaning the relationship between the researcher and the participants should be the same regardless of whether the participant is a child or an adult, however it could be argued that the ethical considerations should be heightened when researching with young children due to the vulnerability issues that O'Reilly *et al.* consider. It is argued that children should not be viewed as the same as, neither as different to, adults (Punch, 2002), but alternatively as on a continuum, which can vary depending on the individual and the other aspects that require reflexivity determined by environment and situation. It was felt for the purposes of this research that each participant should be treated as an individual and ethical considerations be applied as required.

When children were to be included in the sample for each phase of this research project, it was essential that parents gave permission at the outset (BERA, 2018) (appendices 20 and 21). MacNaughton and Hughes (2009) state that historically it has been adequate to seek consent from parents in order to include children in research and Balen *et al.* (2006:29) go so far as to say that parents are 'gatekeepers' for these children. Nutbrown (2010:10) argues against this concept and alleges that parents should be seen as 'guardians', protecting children from harm, and not gatekeepers, just letting people in and out of children's lives. It is argued though that just seeking parent's permission is in contravention of Article 13 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations, 1989) which poses that a child has the right to communicate their opinion on matters that involve them. Therefore, although this is not a legal requirement, it remained imperative that children's permission was sought at the outset of this research project. However, this was insufficient in isolation. When working with young

children it was crucial that it was explained to them, and they understood, the process and the implications of participating. O'Neill (2014) argues that for research with children to be truly child-centric, children should be viewed as agentic and their voices should be heard throughout. The British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018) assert that children should be aware that they can decline to be included in the research, at any point throughout the process, and they feel no pressure to be included in the project.

In contradiction to the UNCRC (1989), it is argued that within research, children's voices can only make a difference if allowed to by an adult. Research designed by an adult and only undertaken with parental permission is indeed allowing children to express their views and opinions, but only with adult permission to do so (Gallagher and Gallagher, 2008). This, Foucault (1989) alleges, is due to the issue of power and that power is viewed as 'a commodity to be acquired, exchanged, shared and relinquished at will' (Gallagher and Gallagher, 2008:502). Research using children as participants generally is *done to* children, rather than *done with* children (Hill *et al.*, 1996) and this poses some issues regarding power. Graham *et al.* (2016) report on the complexity of the power dynamics when researching with young children and acknowledge that this notion is one which can cause difficulties throughout the research process. Children need to feel that they are not forced into participating, because adults are asking them to take part and adults normally make the rules. Dockett *et al.* (2012:253) recognise that children can find it particularly difficult to express dissent within an early years environment, 'where adults have entrenched power' and although it is never possible to totally overcome this, it was essential that children were given the option to withdraw from the research without feeling pressurised into carrying on. Mauthner (1997) argues that this power dynamic may never be overcome because of the difference in age, and the perceived power that an adult possesses over a child. That power dynamic will therefore impact upon all research undertaken by adults when children are participating.

One way that I strived to overcome the issue of power in this research was to ensure that the ethical considerations were an ongoing concern, rather than just being considered at outset. As I was a researcher who was new to the settings concerned, children may have felt more compliant initially with what was, essentially, a stranger, but the habituation process was included to give the opportunity for me to withdraw as children became more comfortable. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) assert that to expand an understanding of ethical issues it is necessary to consider what is not yet known. It is argued therefore that the only way that this can be achieved is to continually reflect and adapt as necessary. This continuous ethical reflexivity was needed throughout the whole project and it is argued that this should be the case for the elements of research that involve adults, just as it does the children (Cohen *et al.*, 2002). This 'ethical mindfulness' (Warin, 2011:810) was therefore adopted throughout the whole project.

Anyone working with children in England is required to have a criminal records check from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and this check should be produced if requested by stakeholders (Gov.UK, 2017). I had obtained this check and a copy was kept with the research documentation whenever undertaking field work. Although there is criticism of these checks, due to the fact that they only show up known convictions (Oliver and White, 2008) at the time that the check is carried out, this was a legal requirement and was therefore essential. For additional safeguarding protection for me, as a researcher, and for the children, I also ensured that I was not left alone with any children at any point during my research. Before any research could be undertaken, I also sought and gained ethical approval from the University of Northampton (appendix 1).

### **6.3: Specific ethical considerations for phase one of the research**

Phase one of this research involved gaining stakeholders' perspectives on (i) quality learning environments for young children and (ii) impact of environment on young children's utterances. This was researched by undertaking semi-structured interviews with parents, practitioners,

“experts” and children. The parents, practitioners and “experts” were all adults, and ethical considerations needed to be made, however the children needed to be considered differently and are discussed separately in section 6.3.2 below.

### **6.3.1: Considerations for undertaking semi-structured interviews with adults**

This chapter has discussed in depth the power dynamics when researching with young children however it should be noted that this is not a consideration solely for researching with children. It is argued that this can apply just as significantly when seeking adult participants. The participants for this aspect of the research included early years practitioners, parents, SLTs and “experts” in the field of SLD. It could therefore be argued that these participants could be made to feel pressurised into partaking in this research because of the perceived power of a researcher in this area. It was therefore essential that no pressure was put on to anyone to participate. A consent letter (appendix 10) was provided in advance of the interview and this clearly set out the fact that participants had the right to withdraw up until the point of data analysis and that participation was completely voluntary. Kvale (1996) reminds researchers that it is essential that an interview is undertaken in way that is sensitive and done by someone who is not only an expert in the subject matter but also an expert in communication and interaction. Although I, as a researcher, cannot profess to be an expert in this area it is argued that previous experience developing communication and interaction skills as an early childhood practitioner and lecturer, set me in good stead for this area. The ethical reflexivity that has been discussed earlier in this chapter was needed when interviewing adults also, and this continual reflection was undertaken throughout.

### **6.3.2: Considerations for undertaking semi-structured interviews with children**

Mahon *et al.* (1996) allege that when undertaking interviews with children, that the ways questions are formulated is of upmost importance, because children are more susceptible to suggestion. This is, according to Birbeck and Drummond (2007:25), 'an obstacle to working with children' and 'makes working with them problematic in terms of research'. The questions were formulated with this in mind, and were piloted to ensure understanding and clarity. When working with young children it is important to ensure that questions are designed with consideration of the cognitive ability of the children, as a lack of understanding can arise if this is misaligned (Mayall, 2000) but also this susceptibility to suggestion could be related to the issues that power dynamics in a research situation can cause (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2000). These problems can be overcome by ensuring that the interviews are undertaken in an environment where the children feel comfortable and supported will assist in the quality and quantity of responses (Powell and Thomson, 2001).

General considerations regarding power dynamics have been discussed above. However, those specific power issues that relate to interviewing children need further consideration. When interviewing children, it should be considered how children will perceive the individual asking the questions. The interviews were undertaken in a familiar environment for the children, as it is recognised that 'provided they are immersed in an environment that is supportive and encouraging, children can, and do, report their observations and feelings no less faithfully than adults' (Birbeck and Drummond, 2007: 24).

How the questions were asked and responded to, was also an ethical consideration. Powell and Thomson (2001) suggest that if children are exposed to repeated questioning this more likely to lead to unreliable responses. Spencer and Flin (1993) believe this to be the case because children look to the interviewer for a response once a question has been

answered and if the question is repeated a child will assume that they answered it incorrectly in the first instance. It was therefore of paramount importance that children were not only made to feel comfortable whilst the questions were being asked, but also when answers were being given. Although it could be argued that this is a methodological consideration, it is asserted that this is also an ethical concern as the aim is to ensure that no maleficence occurs at any point throughout this research. It is argued therefore that if responses are given to children in a way that makes them doubt themselves and feel that they have given responses, then this will impact not only on the data, but could also impact upon the children's sense of wellbeing and self-esteem.

The pilot of the questionnaires with the children indicated that they were not comfortable with the process or the questions being asked. Both children in the pilot lost interest throughout the process and wandered off and child 2 (appendix 4) indicated his discomfort by answering the questions in a way that showed he was uncomfortable and disengaged. BERA (2018) state that children have a right to withdraw from research at any time and this example indicates that as a researcher it remains paramount to take the lead from the child and react accordingly. Although neither of these children stated categorically that they were not comfortable with the research process, their actions showed that this was the case and it was therefore necessary for the questionnaire method to be adapted.

By using a picture as a prompt for the questions (appendix 22) and allowing children to approach the activity rather than inviting them, this appeared to readdress the power balance and meant that children were assenting to being involved in the research (Ford *et al.*, 2007; Cocks, 2006). Children were partaking of their own accord, and were engaged in the process, which appeared to be a lot less threatening for them and as a result generated results that were more reliable and suitable for analysis.



#### **6.4: Specific ethical considerations for phase two of the research**

Phase two of the research involved analysis of the data produced within phase one. Once these data were analysed this resulted in the framework (appendix 12) being developed and piloted. Again, the wording of this framework was essential, and it was a concern that the application of this framework did not cause any distress or harm; either in the way it was worded and the way it was administered.

#### **6.5.: Specific ethical considerations for phase three of the research**

The third, and final, stage of this research was to implement the framework in settings. Alongside this implementation was the need to record and analyse children's utterances to compare and evaluate their speech quality in relation to the quality of the environment.

##### **6.5.1: Considerations for applying the framework to setting environments**

As mentioned in chapter 5 the application of the framework was undertaken by an independent other who had been trained in how to apply the document, as well as myself, in the final week of field work. The main purpose for this dual lens approach was to reduce bias however this also assisted in the ethical procedures. Habermas (1972) asserted that society is less considerate of ethical issues when undertaking an evaluation, since assessment processes have become more common. It is argued that this be even more relevant today, over 40 years later, as education has become an assessed concept (Haslip and Gullo, 2018). Although this may be so, it was essential that this process be undertaken in an ethical manner.

The research assistant in this case was chosen carefully. She or he needed to have knowledge of early years, knowledge of different environments but also have no prior knowledge of the settings involved.

The person used in this instance was a manager of a “good” setting (Ofsted) that operated a FS, so was aware of the differing environments. It could be argued that this assistant is placed in a position of power (Foucault, 1989) and it was therefore important that this power was used in a way that did no harm to others (BERA, 2018). By working together, rather than independently, to administer the TQAF meant that a cohesive approach could be adopted, and ethical procedures could be supervised.

It was important that the results of the TQAF be discussed with the setting manager before the research team left the setting, from an ethical perspective. Ballantine *et al.* (2000) state that participants should have the opportunity to discuss and challenge any assertions that are made when undertaking an evaluation. Once the analysis had been undertaken it was therefore shared with the setting manager.

### **6.5.2: Considerations for recording and analysing children’s speech**

In English Law parents are the child’s proxy in respect of consent and children can, legally only assent to taking part in research (Palaologou, 2012). Parents’ permission was therefore sought prior to any observations of children (appendices 20 and 21), however, as previously acknowledged this was insufficient in isolation. It was also important that this parental consent was not explicitly referred to when discussing this project with the children. Harcourt and Conroy (2009) believe that children can be led to feel that the choice to participate has been taken from them, if they are aware that parents have already consented. It was therefore ensured that this was not used as leverage. Also, it is worth noting that although parents provided informed consent at outset, as did the children, this consent was insufficient in its own right (BERA, 2018). It is argued that ethical consideration should be made throughout the research process, rather than just at the outset (Harcourt and Sargeant, 2011). The nature of this project was such that this ongoing consent was sought and, as Dockett *et al.* (2012:248) state, this should therefore be

referred to as 'process consent'. Recording devices were attached to the children every time that data were collected, and this assisted in the process consent being obtained. Each time the devices were fitted, the children were reminded of the research and consent obtained again, before beginning the recordings, in language they could understand. Christensen and Prout (2002) suggest that a dialogue with the children should be ongoing throughout the research process to confirm assent. This dialogue occurred between the lead practitioner and, inevitably, between the children and this process consent was an intrinsic aspect of the research process.

It was also essential that ongoing assent was obtained from the children concerned. Assent has different definitions in the world of research with children, with Ford *et al.* (2007:20) defining assent as 'agreement obtained from those who are not able to enter into a legal contract' and Cocks (2006:258) referring to assent as a process which requires the researcher to be 'vigilant to the responses of the child'. A combination of these two definitions that was felt to be appropriate for this project. It was important that permission was sought from these children as participants, even though they could not sign a legal contract as such, although it was not purely their permission in one off spoken assertions but also being aware of their responses, and emotions, throughout the whole process. If any child had showed an element of distress at the process then they would have been encouraged to withdraw (BERA, 2018).

Throughout this research it was important that children were not pressurised into taking part and that they felt safe in the process (BERA, 2018). The issue of power has been discussed earlier in this chapter, and it has been recognised that is unlikely that this issue can be overcome completely (Palaologou, 2012). However, to minimise this, between each child and myself as researcher, the lead practitioner of each setting acted as the communicator. When taking Vygotsky's theory (1962) of shared

meaning and understanding (intersubjectivity) into consideration, it was necessary that the process was explained to the children in a manner that was in line with their realms of understanding. When the class teacher explained the research process to the children, this enhanced the children's understanding. The teacher had the detailed knowledge of the individual children's abilities to understand concepts and language and was therefore able to explain the process in a more appropriate fashion than myself, with no prior knowledge of the children's abilities. Dockett and Perry (2011) believe that this familiar adult can also help to gauge assent as this adult is also more able to spot signs of distress and discomfort. It could be argued that each child was more likely to agree to taking part in the research because it was their teacher asking them to do so, however the advantage of the teacher being able to read the non-verbal cues due to them having sound knowledge of the children, outweighed this potential concern. The process of using the familiar teacher was therefore adopted to aid children's understanding and to ensure children were genuinely happy to be involved in the research.

The children who did not have devices, and who were not participants in the research, were protected in order that there was no differentiation and non-maleficence (O'Reilly *et al.*, 2013). There is a plethora of articles written about the ethical protection of children who are directly involved in research (Nutbrown, 2010; Christensen and Prout, 2002), however it is argued that it is equally essential to consider the ethics of the children who are involved by default; those who are indirectly involved by just being present at the same time. Children notice that they have not been included in the research project (Richardson, 2019b). It could be argued that it is possible that these children, those who have been omitted from the research, could have had their self-worth and self-esteem levels affected by this exclusion and it was therefore essential that ethical considerations went so much further than those for the participants. Dowling argues that 'one of the most important gifts we can offer young children is a positive view of themselves' (2014:12) and it was essential that this research, and not being involved in it, did not impact upon the view that children had of themselves. It could be argued that just by

being present at the time the research was undertaken, meant that all the children within the setting environment were participatory. It was therefore essential that all children were treated with equal respect and consideration, and that no child was left to feel demoralised in any way as result of the research process. The European Early Childhood Educational Research Association (EECERA) (2015:6) states that participants should be viewed as 'subjects with rights, not objects.' Again, it is suggested that this should be the case also for those who are present in a non-participatory manner. European guidelines state that 'all research must be conducted with the human rights and capabilities of all respondents being given absolute respect and acknowledgement' (EECERA, 2015:6) but it was felt that this needed to be taken one step further and this respect and acknowledgement needed to be extended to ALL those involved, one way or another. BERA guidelines (2018:5) do begin to consider the wider picture by stating that participants in research must be protected from harm, and participants 'may simply be part of the context'. This was definitely the case for this research and therefore needed constant thought and reflection throughout the research process.

I created a leaflet that all the children could take away with them and revisit at times that they needed to (appendix 23). Arizpe and Styles (2003) acknowledge that every time a child revisits written text alongside pictures then they take something different from this. That was the intention of this leaflet; that children could revisit it and process the information and the implications at different times and within different situations to aid their understanding of the process. It was acknowledged that this leaflet be produced in a way that was appropriate to the age range, was culturally relevant and was suitable for the developmental level of the children involved (Ruiz-Casares and Thompson, 2016). Dockett *et al.* (2012) see this type of child-friendly instrument as a positive attempt at gaining consent, although at the same time warn that this approach could cause complacency with researchers. Graham *et al.* (2016:84) discuss that the use of such creative approaches can 'overshadow children's attention towards making an informed choice' on the basis that they provide the 'novelty factor' and therefore detract from

the real issue at hand. It was therefore important throughout this project that this leaflet was not the only tool used to obtain consent, but was just one item in the ethical toolbox.

It is recognised that using audio visual methods for researching with young children can cause complications around the issues of privacy and consent. Collecting data in this way can result in data being captured that is beyond the realms of the research question and that children may end up divulging information that they did not wish to share (Skovdal and Abebe, 2012). For a researcher this provides a moral obligation: the leaflet explained that information would not be shared but there exists a safeguarding obligation within this aspect for consideration. If a child were heard to share information that would put them at risk, or ethically needed to be reported, such as an allegation of abuse, then I as the researcher had the obligation to report that. Although privacy and confidentiality had been promised, this was therefore a caveat and was explained to children at outset and prior to each recording, to reiterate the research stance on this. Birbeck and Drummond (2007:27) go so far as to say that if a researcher does not intervene when a child's safety is threatened then this, in itself, is unethical, and 'also highly unrealistic in terms of the realities of the social system of childhood'. This paradox of ethical stance compared to a moral stance is something that obviously had to be considered and it was decided that judgement would need to be applied at the time, should anything occur that caused concern. Keddie (2000) believes that this can put a researcher in a position where they are forced to choose between their validity of data and the moral responsibility to the children concerned. Although Birbeck and Drummond (2007) allege that it is likely that this kind of dilemma is faced regularly when researching with young children, they also point out, paradoxically, that it is rarely discussed within literature. They allege that this may be due to the view that this could be considered as interference with the data should the researcher intervene. Jamison and Gilbert (2000) suggest a way to overcome this dilemma should be to view children as being capable participants in the research process however, at the same time

needing protection. This was the stance taken throughout this research. It was decided to view the children as able and willing participants, however at the same time keeping in mind that these young children may need protecting if the situation arose. It was also necessary to inform the other children involved in the session, those who were non-participants, that this recording was taking place and an obligation to report existed. It may have been that a non-participant child was heard to say something that put them, or others at risk, and although they were not directly involved in the research process this indirect involvement would necessitate action. All stakeholders were therefore informed of this and the research proceeded on that basis.

#### **6.6: Ethical considerations regarding data analysis and data storage**

Children have a right to confidentiality and privacy, as do adults (Dockett *et al.*, 2012). BERA (2018) and EECERA (2015) guidelines were therefore followed and no identifying features were given so that all participants remained anonymous at all times. Data protection rules were also adhered to (Data Protection Act 1998; European Commission, 2018) and all data were stored on the University of Northampton's password protected secure server to ensure complete safety and privacy.

It is acknowledged that, once analysed, data should be kept for a 'reasonable period of time' (Creswell, 2009:91). Although a 'reasonable period of time' is unspecified, Sieber (1998) recommends this reasonable period of time to be somewhere between 5 and 10 years. It was therefore essential that these data were kept safely and again the University's secure server was the holding place for this.

#### **6.7: Other ethical considerations**

All participants were thanked for their involvement and, although Wendler *et al.* (2002) assert that that appreciation can be regarded as a form of

payment for participation, it was regarded as basic etiquette that those involved be thanked. In phase three, where other children were present, but not partaking directly, it was essential that all children were shown appreciation. Even if they were not directly involved in the research they were still aware of it, and had some element of indirect involvement, so it was therefore essential that all were thanked for their assistance. This was done verbally to the whole group of children. Graham *et al.* (2016) suggest that praising children is usual in early childhood environments and therefore presented no ethical dilemma in this instance.

It is also worth noting that this research was undertaken within four different settings and it was necessary to consider that not all settings were exactly the same, neither did they have exactly the same approach to the way that children were considered. Solberg (2014) asserts that different stakeholders will hold different views on what is considered acceptable, or harmful, and it is therefore argued that discussions around the ethics should be held with all stakeholders before the project begins. These discussions were held before the research was undertaken within each setting but it also worth noting that my values and ethical responsibility remained the same, even though the settings may have differed.

It is also worth pointing out here that no conflict of interest existed with any of the settings or participants, meaning that I had no direct involvement with any of the settings. The settings were selected in a way that this did not arise, as this was important to me as a researcher, from an ethical perspective as well as from a point of bias.

## **6.8: Conclusion**

Cannella and Lincoln (2007:315) state that 'research ethics will never be clearly definable' and it is recognised that each research project will have its own dilemmas and solutions. Hesse-Bieber and Leavey (2006) state



that researchers need to consider ethical issues that may arise throughout the research process. It could be argued that as this style of research has been undertaken before (Richardson and Murray, 2016; Richardson, 2019b), this gave extra insight and ensured that this project could be afforded additional ethical consideration. It was possible to be aware of some of the issues before they occurred. With regards to the ethical considerations, Gallagher and Gallagher (2008:513) go so far as to say that the ethics of a study, the 'methodological attitude taken' is far more important than the methods themselves. It is argued that the ethical considerations are indeed important, but should not be seen on a scale of hierarchy with other aspects of the research design; instead they should be viewed as equally as important as the methods and the adopted methodology. All aspects of the research design, it is argued, are equally important and should have equal attention in the planning process.

When considering the philosophical stance adopted throughout this project, transcendental idealism (Kant, 1781), it is argued that this applies to the ethical approach adopted also. This ethical approach had to cover what was known (*a posteriori*), through a combination of experience and reasoning, but also had to adapt to what was felt (*a priori*) and what was in the environment at the time.

As a result of the discussions throughout this chapter it was ensured that ethical considerations were thorough and rigorous throughout this project and throughout the process of data analysis. It was extremely important that participants were protected throughout the research process in the ways articulated in this chapter, and were seen as individuals and not an entirety for the sole purposes of research.

The chapter that follows presents the findings from the first phase of the research process.

# Chapter 7

## Phase one findings

### 7.1: Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the first phase of this research that set out to establish stakeholders' views (n=63) on what constitutes a HQE with regards to SLD for young children. The chapter will present these findings in line with the research questions that this phase was applicable to, being:

- RQ1: In the field of early childhood in England, are there distinctive features of an IC environment, an OC environment and a NE, according to stakeholders? If so, what are these features?
- RQ2: What are the impacts of the different environments on the quality of young children's utterances?

These research questions, and this chapter, align with the following study objectives:

1. To identify stakeholders' perspectives on defining features of an IC environment, an OC environment and a NE in the field of early childhood in England
2. To establish the impact of the environments on the quality of young children's utterances

### 7.2: Participants in phase one

Table 7.1 details the constitution of the participatory group in phase one. This shows that there was a total of 63 participants; 13 parents, 16 practitioners, 29 children and five "experts" (detailed in section 5.4.1.2). These participants were taken from four settings, as planned, along with the "experts" who came from various aspects within the field of Early Years.

Table 7.1: Compilation of participants within phase one.

	Setting 1 (S1)	Setting 2 (S2)	Setting 3 (S3)	Setting 4 (S4)	Experts (see 5.4.1.2 for details)	<b>Category total</b> (from left to right)
No. of parents	3	2	4	4		<b>13</b>
No. of practitioners	4	4	4	4		<b>16</b>
No. of children	6	8	8	7		<b>29</b>
No. of experts					5	<b>5</b>
<b>Total from each setting</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>63</b>

### 7.3: Stakeholders' perspectives on the distinctive features of different play and learning environments

Stakeholders were asked to define the three different environments that were the focus of this study: ICs, OCs and NEs. Most participants responded to this question and defined each area separately, one after the other. However, four respondents, two from setting three and two "experts", stated that they felt that there should be no differentiation and that all three environments should be classed as one. A practitioner from setting three stated:

*There's no difference. There shouldn't be a defined area it should just be one continuum where, where it flows basically. In my view, that's my vision. (PA3S3\_32-33)*

And “expert” three, an author on communication, agreed, by stating:

*I don't see that in an ideal world there should be any kind of separation because I see as one space. (E3\_31-32)*

“Expert” four, an Ofsted inspector, said of the definitions of environment:

*There is a reason why it's not stipulated to be explicit like that because I think that there is a danger, from Ofsted's point of view, where they want to make it very clear to their inspectors that no one is to have a preferred view of what quality environments should explicitly be. (E4\_24-27)*

Although these views have been considered, it has also been noted that the idea of this environment that flows seamlessly from one to another is recognised as being a “vision” (PA3S3) or “in an ideal world” (E3). This project is situated in the current context of early years practice in the English Midlands and therefore needs to represent that context (Myers, 2005) and what is happening in current practice. It requires definitions that are applicable to practice to assist with the analysis of quality. It was therefore necessary to provide these definitions and through thematic analysis (appendix 6) it has been possible, by using participants’ views, to define an IC, an OC and a NE, and provide an answer to RQ1 above. These three environments will now be discussed in further detail, and findings will be presented accordingly.

### **7.3.1: Stakeholders’ perspectives on defining features of an indoor classroom**

Stakeholders identified distinguishing features of an IC (fig. 7.1).

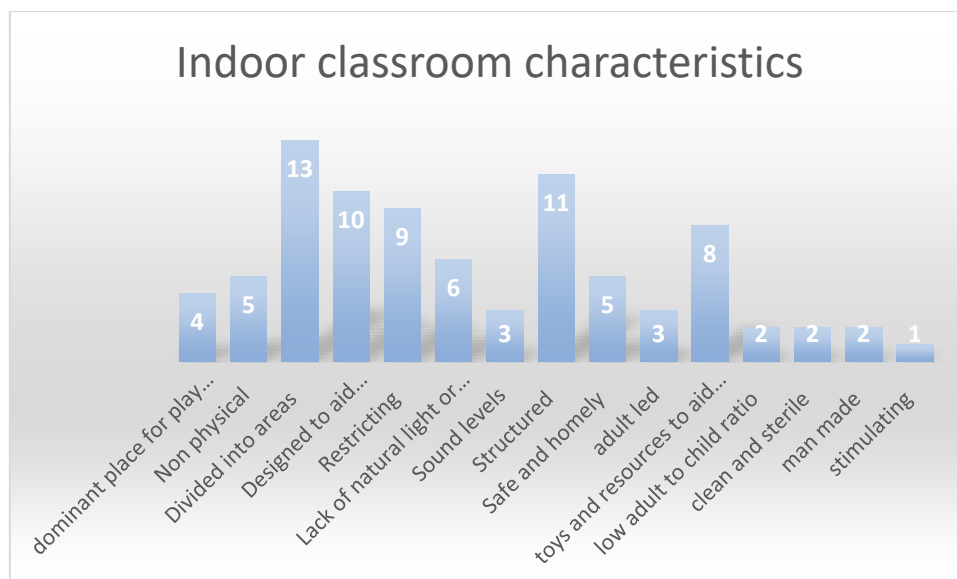


Fig 7.1: Indoor classroom characteristics

As can be seen from fig.7.1, there were a range of IC characteristics identified by stakeholders when interviewed. The most common occurrence was in the response that the IC would be divided into specific areas (n=13), with participants giving detail to their opinion as follows:

*An indoor classroom? There will be activities set up. Different resources, like plastic, all different kind of things set up. Different areas. So you've got your home corner, your dressing up areas, then you've got sand and water, arts and crafts areas, reading, reading areas will be set up within that area. All in their own areas.* (PA4S2\_16-19)

*It's always nice to have separate areas I think, umm, so you know reading corner is always very good. A craft area. Obviously you need somewhere for coats and all that kind of thing, but I think the more areas a building can be broken up into the better.* (PA1S4\_35-37)

As well as being divided into areas it was found that participants felt that an IC was structured (n=11) in the way that it is set out, with furniture and activities shaping the environment. Participants stated:

*Indoor classrooms? Desks. Formal. So pens, paper, a teachers desk, kind of thing, an area for sitting down and listening to stories and an indoor classroom of like B's age (3 years and 3 months old) or reception at school would have play, because obviously I've been there with O, (daughter aged 8) a play area. Learning through play but not kind of, if I think of the others (environments), (it's) more formal indoor. (PA7S3\_18-21)*

*I think the thing about in the classroom is there is a tendency for it to bit more structured – a bit more zonal – if that's a word. (PA4S1\_21-23)*

Participants also referred to the lack of exposure to natural light or to the elements (n=6) and felt that an IC would be restricting or contained (n=9). These opinions were expressed by comments such as:

*Well it's contained, so it's protected from the elements. So you've got a protected environment (E2\_12-13)*

*There is some natural light coming in through the windows but there is no fresh air (PA2S1\_23-24)*

*Restricted. That would be the first word. (PA8S3\_14)*

As well as the static features of the environment that are often outside of the practitioner's remit, the interviewees discussed features that practitioners were able to bring to the IC and, recognising that the environment was designed to aid children's development (n=10), they discussed the necessity to have toys and resources within the environment to aid such development (n=8). Statements that following indicated this point included:

*You'll find paper. Things for children to write with and draw with. So pens, pencils, paint, things like that. Books so that children can read. Toys that will help them to learn and just a colourful atmosphere. (PA5S2\_17-19)*

*Well an indoor .....play areas with dinosaurs and stuff like that. I came in here the other day and there were blocks of wood and pieces of paper around it and there was a girl there straight away, just drawing shapes. It was really nice to see. She'd come in earlier and got onto it straight away. It was really good..... lots of different stuff (PA1S3\_17-24)*

Children agreed with the need for toys and resources within the IC, shown by the following drawings:



Fig 7.2: Children's response to "what do we need to make the best nursery in the whole world?" – Setting three.



Fig. 7.2 shows the children's drawings from setting three, indicating what they feel is necessary within an indoor environment to make it the "best nursery in the whole world". They drew items such as "villain suits", "toys", "tractors" and a "shark in water".

Fig. 7.3: Children's response to "what do we need to make the best nursery in the whole world?" – Setting one.



The children from setting one drew the drawing in fig. 7.3 and for their “best nursery in the whole world” they required “playdo”, “pens”, “aeroplanes”, “candlesticks”, “sticks”, “colours”, “making” and a “rainbow ladder”.

Figures 7.2 and 7.3 indicate that children, in their responses, made clear reference to indoor environments containing toys and resources (appendices 24, 25, 26 & 27) with items such as cars, pens and modelling dough featuring within the indoor environment.

### 7.3.2: Stakeholders’ perspectives on defining features of an outdoor classroom

Stakeholders identified distinguishing features of an OC as follows:

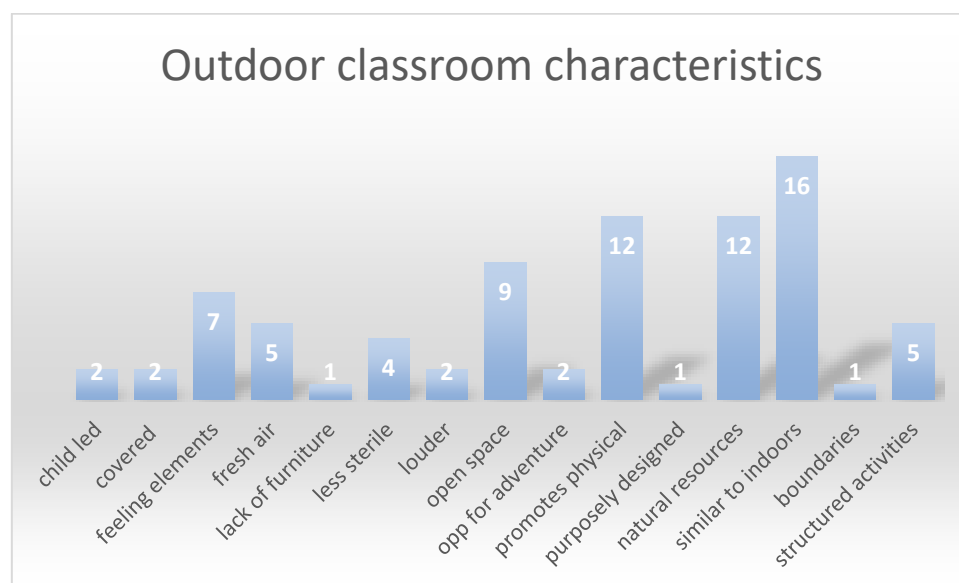


Fig 7.4: Outdoor classroom characteristics

Fig.7.4 shows that stakeholders identified a range of characteristics that they believed to define an OC. The most common response was that participants identified the outdoor space as similar to the indoors (n=16), with statements such as the following highlighting this:

*Because I think some schools, when I’ve looked around schools, they have an outdoor environment which you could call as an outdoor classroom, but it’s an extension to the indoors, if that makes sense. (PA6S2\_68-70)*



*Again generally because it's a classroom it will be set out with specific areas for different.... for encouraging different things for play or learning.....very similar to the inside, just bigger. (E2\_29-35)*

Although the OC was deemed to be similar to the IC, the OC was reported to be more likely to have natural resources within it, compared with the IC (n=12) and participants felt that this was a defining feature of the OC, exemplified as follows:

*So lots of outdoor opportunities to play so water, sand. That natural sort of resources (PA3S4\_18-19)*

*I think of trees and fresh air and just space. Natural things. Sticks and stones and just the ability I suppose to be a bit more messy. You haven't got the restriction of keeping it clean, the carpets. (PA8S3\_40-42)*

In their responses children agreed with these findings by stating that within an OC they would expect to find "green things", "flowers" and a "vegetable patch with carrots, potatoes and grass in it" and a "barrow to carry the potatoes" (fig. 7.3), indicating their awareness of the natural resources within the OC environment.

In addition to similarities to the indoors, and exposure to more natural resources, participants also suggested that the opportunity for physical activity was a likely aspect of the OC (n=12), with statements reiterating this such as:

*And then outside you would have more of the, you know, the obstacle courses. More of the gross motor skills of the physical development I'd say. Outside you've got big tyres, big reels where they can make obstacle courses and they explore it in that way. (PA4S4\_18-20)*

*I think there's been a tendency for staff and professionals and parents to view it more of a space to run, whereas that indoor classroom is a space to sit. (PA4S1\_38-40)*

There was a recognition that the OC was more of an open space than the indoors (n=9) and that there would be exposure to the elements (n=7), such as the wind and the rain, and with particular reference to fresh air (n=5).

*It's open to the elements. It's open too so you feel more of the cold, the heat, the rain, the sun, the snow, whatever it is. (PA4S1\_35-37)*

*An outdoor classroom is not completely enclosed, so not completely protected from the elements although quite often outdoor classrooms will have some kind of cover above. So maybe an awning or a gazebo or will have at least 1 to 2 open sides so at least the wind can get in and you see the rain, smell the rain, feel the wind and feel the temperature changes. (E2\_22-25)*

### 7.3.3: Stakeholders' perspectives on defining features of a natural environment

Throughout the interviews stakeholders were asked to discuss the distinguishing features of a NE. The responses are shown in the figure below:

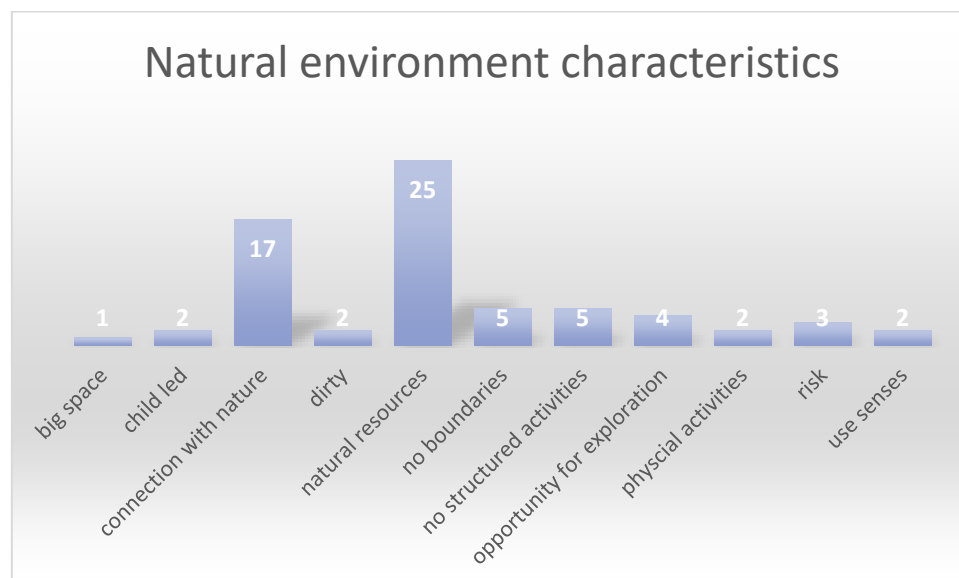


Fig 7.5: Natural environment characteristics

As can be seen in fig.7.5, the majority of factors that participants identified as defining the NE were the presence of natural resources (n=25) and the connection with nature (n=17). A parent from setting one explained a NE as somewhere where children could:

*go out to an "open forest", and work and probably learn in a natural, with very natural resources. Rather than a pen and paper and the things that you buy from a shop (laughter) I think it's just their body, more imagination in a forest school I think if used. I put it back to cavemen to be honest, how they probably used to live, before we became very 20th century. (PA5S1\_35-40)*

And a practitioner from setting three agreed, by stating:

*And natural is exactly that. Nature. Children are connected to nature and natural objects and I think that the natural part of it is just the unlimited amount of imagination and resources the children have just allows it's important that all those three, those areas just allows for a continuous flow. That's how I see it. (PA3S3\_25-28)*

Children did agree with adult participants in this area, to an extent. They talked about natural resources however tended to focus more on the doing of the activities related to the resources, rather than the natural resources themselves. Examples of this are where children said, "there's a big circle for the fire", "we need marshmallows to cook on the fire" and "we need a holding for marshmallows" (children from setting one, appendix 24). At setting two, children talked of "grass" and "water", but again there was an emphasis on the activities, with things such as "we need trees to climb" and "a big black tyre – we go in it!" (appendix 25).

With regards to the children's responses there was also a prevalence of imaginary items listed as things that they would expect to find within a NE. Responses included "a monster", "a bear" and an "Easter bunny" from setting three children (appendix 26), "a tiger, elephants, lion and a hippo" and "a mouse and the gruffallo" from children from setting three (appendix 26) and a "dinosaur" and "another dinosaur" from setting four's children (appendix 27).

#### **7.3.4: Conclusion regarding defining features of different play and learning environments**

Based on the findings detailed above, and in response to RQ1; *In the field of early childhood in England, are there distinctive features of an IC environment, an OC environment and a NE, according to stakeholders? If so, what are these features?* it is possible to define these three

environments for the settings within this case study using distinctive features, and these have been discussed thus far.

It was then necessary to explore the concept of quality with regards to aiding young children's SL, within these three different environments (IC, OC and NE), with the aim of answering RQ2; *What are the impacts of the different environments on the quality of young children's utterances?* and study objective two; *to establish the impact of the environment on the quality of young children's utterances*. The nature of the semi-structured interview was such that responses provided depth and detail that could be thematically analysed and the results from this analysis will now be presented below.

#### **7.4: Quality aspects needed to support young children's speech and language development**

Following analysis (appendix 6) of respondents' views concerning aspects that constituted a HQEs to support young children's SL, the following themes were identified: resources, environment and atmosphere. Each is now discussed in detail.

##### **7.4.1: Resources**

The results from the thematic analysis (appendix 6) identified the theme of "resources". Sub-themes were then mind-mapped and specific elements were identified.

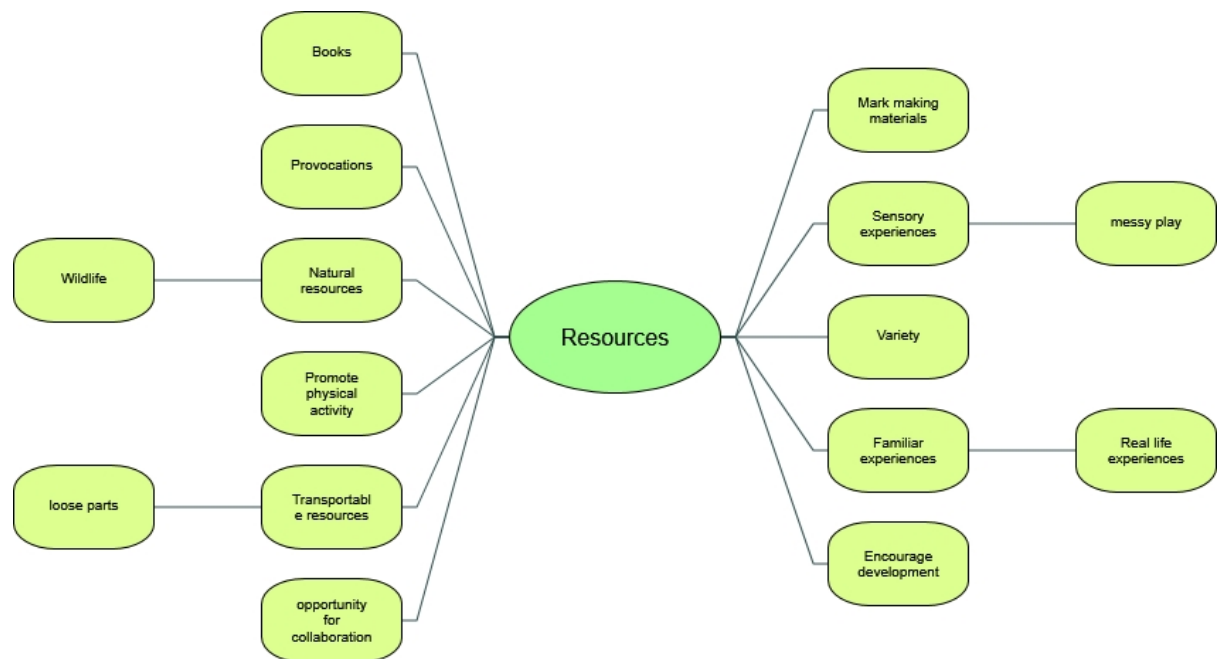


Fig 7.6: Mind map indicating prevalent elements within resources theme.

As indicated in fig.7.6, eleven elements were identified within the theme 'resources'. Each is now discussed individually.

#### 7.4.1i: Provocations

Participants identified 'provocations' as an element necessary to support SLD within an environment, for example:

*I think lots of objects to provoke, to provoke an interest, to provoke a conversation. Whether that be the natural resources that you find. Whether that be whacky objects that have been made rather than .....what else? (PA4S1\_168-170)*

*I think a tool area is really important because it, it, you know they'll ask. If you've got a shed full of tools, like when you go in your grandad's shed. Like, you just want to know what every single thing is don't you? And what it does. And so I think that's quite important. (PA7S3\_178-180)*

*Probably that they've got the right tools to learn with as well.....Like here, they've got different stuff that they use so it encourages them to ask questions cos obviously they don't know half the stuff they do. So what's that and it encourages them to ask those questions, to listen, to see what it is....To ask those questions. Of why. Why do we do that? Otherwise you would just get on with it and not ask those questions. (PA2S3\_35-146)*

When asked what the three most important elements should be to help SLD (appendix 3), respondents identified 'provocations' as a high-ranking answer (n=13). As the excerpts above indicate, there was an awareness among respondents that children need items of interest, to promote questions and enthusiasm and that these items are ideally unusual and not what children would usually be exposed to in their everyday lives. One parent stated that a starfish was a particular example of a provocation that supported young children's SLD successfully:

*There needs to be things in there because the most important thing about speech and language for me is the....it's knowing what it is so if you're learning a word like starfish "what is a starfish? Where does a starfish live? What does the starfish do?" Yeah so by that I mean have the things there. Not just a picture of it. (PA3S1\_117-120)*

#### **7.4.1ii: Mark making materials**

When considering the aspects that were required to help SL develop, participants listed mark making materials as a required element due to the fact that *"I think if we're looking at language, we're looking at written language as well as oral language"* (E4\_121-122). Although participants realised that the discussion was around speech aspects of language there appeared a desire to include mark making as a crucial aspect of this.

*Just a lot of different experiences that would interest them and want to get them talking. And drawing. So lots of different drawing materials and things always help, I think, the speech. (PA8S3\_139-140)*

*I think probably being able to write as well would come into it. I think all of those things together so having like pens and that.....I think even if they're not forming words or letters or something they can still make pictures and tell you what the pictures are. Explain to you, you know, that's mummy and that's daddy and things like that so I think that will be really advantageous to actually giving them the ..... (PA5S2\_222-234)*

There was a realisation throughout discussion around mark making that this may not be in the traditional sense, with paper and pens, if looking at a NE. This was reinforced by one practitioner who *said, "So like instead of just pens you could use like twigs to write with"* (PA5S3\_232-233).

#### 7.4.1iii: Natural resources/wildlife

When asked what the three most important things within an environment are to assist with SL, eight respondents cited natural resources (fig. 1, appendix 28), and when they were questioned about what made a quality NE, natural resources and wildlife were two of the higher scoring responses (fig 4, appendix 28), compared to the indoor and OCs (fig. 7.7).

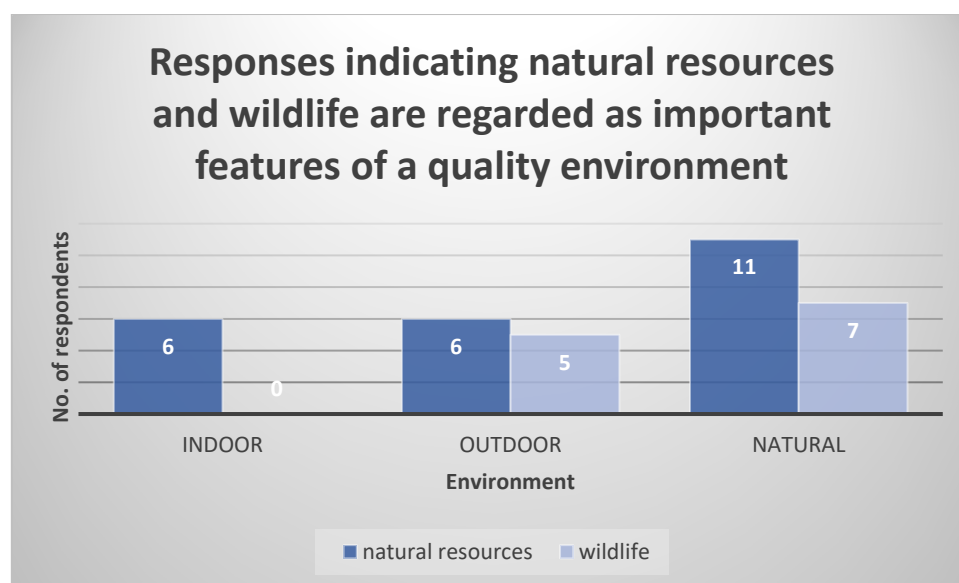


Fig.7.7: Responses indicating natural resources and wildlife are regarded as important features of a quality environment.

Fig. 7.7 indicates that respondents considered that natural resources should be a feature of a HQE to assist SLD and that wildlife (meaning insects, bugs, animals, pets – either naturally occurring or placed within the environment, such as guinea pigs or rabbits in a cage) was also an aspect that should be attended to. It should be noted however that nobody saw this as necessary within the IC environment.

#### 7.4.1iv: Promoting physical activity

When questioned about the three most important things within an environment to assist SLD, two respondents stated that there should be opportunities for physical development (fig. 1, appendix 28). However,

when discussing the three different environments in isolation, physical development only occurred in discussions around the OC (fig. 3, appendix 28). A practitioner from setting one stated:

*It (the environment) has to develop all sorts of muscles skills and what else can I say....some children need some sort of support with jumping up or some sort of obstacle courses and some children just need to practice their balancing skills and some children just need to learn be aware of other children and to be run freely around other children. (SA1P1\_41-48)*

A practitioner from setting three talked about the need to run so that activities then generate communication:

*They've got to have space to run and be free because all the role-play will usually start from physical play. So that outlet of whatever endorphins, adrenaline, just encourage them to be social and once they start running together, they're together. They'll be laughing and they'll turn and suddenly they'll all split off into a group and then, into their groups and then little role-plays will start. Investigations and explorations will start, so you've got to be able to have space, which having a free environment allows you to have because you've got all that space and then everything can come in and be used each day. (PA4S3\_195-201)*

#### **7.4.1v: Sensory items/allowing mess**

It was asserted by participants that there should be a need within a HQE for children to engage in sensory play; that is play that engages a variety of senses and allows children to get messy should they wish to (tables 1, 2, 3 and 4, appendix 9).

One parent discussed the difference in her two children (O and B). O went to a pre-school where most of the time was spent indoors and B is attending a setting that exposes children to the NE regularly. She talked about how B's language has benefited from being within different environments, and using her senses:

*She will pick a worm up and say it's a wriggly worm. You know, whereas O wouldn't have done that. And like acorns and conkers and fir tree. I think B, she kind of exaggerates words more. She*



*knows more words. She'll describe the words more but O would've said a tree and B will say it's a fir tree but she's probably been shown that from being outside so much. Because she wants to be outside. We're outside. I'm always freezing cold. (PA7S3\_115-120)*

A parent from setting two identified that children being able to get messy was a positive element and stated:

*And children can get messy and it doesn't matter if they get messy. I think that's great that...Yeah I think it's great. They don't get the chance to get messy like that at home all the time so to be able to go to a Forest School or a secret garden and to have that opportunity and just to let themselves go crazy (laughter) and get dirty. It's just great. (PA5S2\_128-130)*

Although this area appeared on the list of important aspects for a HQE, it did not get mentioned when discussing the specifics of an indoor environment, only the OC and NE.

#### **7.4.1vi: Variety of resources**

When asked what constitutes a HQE, participants not only responded that resources were one of the most important considerations, particularly for the IC environment (n=24 for ICs, n=13 for OCs and n=4 within a NE), but that a variety of resources is necessary. This variety was again the most prominent feature when discussing the IC (n=16), compared to the OC (n=13) and even less important within the NE (n=7) (fig. 5, appendix 28). "Expert" two, a FS trainer, said, when discussing resources:

*Specifically for the indoor. I suppose it's a case of making sure each area of development and each area of learning and play is available to those children. So it's having that variety of activities, that variety of resources available so that they can explore in their play and have different experiences depending on where they are and using language or using their bodies or using their mathematical skills. (E2\_62-66)*

A parent from setting one, discussed resources also and talked about the necessity for variety:

*it's lots of.... lots of different types of activities and this room I think is quite a good example. You've got different areas to children's likes and dislikes or what they gravitate towards rather, because*

*they like everything at this stage. You know, like you've got the pots and pans indoors and again I would consider that to be an indoor activity, although I have seen that it's not necessarily limited to indoors but again the sort of thing you see in the home. For example, my son has a small plastic Fisher-Price kitchen and it's got cups and saucers and things like that and you know making food and cooking food and things like that so, so lots of different hands-on stuff. (PA7S1\_49-56)*

This participant recognised the need for the resources and experiences to be familiar to the children and this will now be discussed further.

#### **7.4.1vii: Familiar experiences**

The participant above, and others within the study, recognised that there is a need for children to have exposure to experiences that are familiar and represent real life experiences that represent their social and cultural backgrounds. The indoor environment (n=4) and the NE (n=4) were where respondents suggested they were more important, compared to the OC (n=1), with "expert" five, an SLT, sharing her experience of the benefits of real life experiences when assisting SLD as follows:

*Real knives and forks and these were three year olds with glass, pouring their own drinks...and snack time became quite an area of focus so, yes, lots of turn taking can go on there, who's turn is it next? Names because a lot of children with language delay actually find that they don't remember children's names and they're not using necessarily very good eye contact and, as you know, snack is they just go and get it and zoom off but this is, you know, preparing their own snack, using cutlery, chopping, and you can get so much from that. I think that's what I would have. Somewhere they could do baking and cooking and that sort of thing. (E5\_155-162)*

A practitioner from setting three explained why he thought that this familiarity was necessary to help promote SL:

*...then you put them in the home room where everything is about home, and they'll have massive conversations with you about, telling you about this is what I do with mum, or I cook this with mum, I do this and that experiential language, you've got to have things in the environment that can bring that out and then once the child is confident to talk about that and you've broken down that*

*boundary and they respect the fact that you've listen to them, you're in then. You can start that sort of dual process. (PA4S3\_78-84)*

These familiar, real life experiences were therefore considered to be a necessary aspect of a HQE.

#### **7.4.1viii: Transportable resources/loose parts**

In addition to resources that represented real life experiences, it was recognised by participants (n=3) that resources should be transportable between environments, and that no restrictions on play should exist with regards to the location of resources. These restrictions, participants stated, should also be avoided through the utilisation of loose parts, resources with no set purpose, or open-ended resources. The following statement articulates this point:

*I think if you have too many prescribed activities where you want an outcome for something, a very definitive sort of outcome, then I don't think that's overly quality because you're almost dictating to how the outcomes should be and you're dictating to them what you want to see, and that's your own.....Whereas I think if you have things that are open ended, I suppose you've heard about the loose parts type work coming out. I think that is good within an outside setting as well. And an indoor setting you can use those things. They're a bit more open ended in how you use them. And then obviously forest school I think I like the way we've got our forest school because it isn't set up in specific areas, you know when there's a mud kitchen there, there isn't, you know it's not prescribed at all. There is logs and things for den building and whatever but actually they just use them however they want to so it's very much, literally, the stuff that's there really. So I quite like that idea. (PA5S4\_50-64)*

The need for resources to have no set learning intention, to be open ended, so that children can dictate their own direction of play was therefore noted as important. At the same time as this however, it is noted that there must be some direction when providing resources for children and this will be discussed further now.

#### **7.4.1ix: Encourage development**

Respondents recognised the need to promote young children's development within an early years environment, and felt the resources should be appropriate and provided in line with children's developmental needs. There was more emphasis on this aspect when discussing the indoor and OC environments, with covering the learning outcomes being a response from seven participants when they were questioned about what makes a quality indoor environment, eight participants stating that learning opportunities contributed to a quality OC, and only two participants listing this as necessary within the NE (appendix 9). There was also a caveat from those two respondents that stated that although the NE would promote development it would not be done explicitly, with one participant stating:

*yeah and then obviously they use it (the natural environment) for like counting things so actually covers all their areas and they don't realise they're doing it. (PA4S2\_206-207)*

"Expert" four, an Ofsted inspector, stated that what occurred within the environment, with regards to meeting children's developmental needs, was a crucial factor when assessing quality. She stated:

*So what then happens is within the framework, the inspection framework, the environment then comes under the judgements of quality of teaching and learning in which they reference the, being able to review resources to meet the needs of the children. And it's more to do with the activities and also in the leadership and management looking at how the physical environment is organised and reviewing that in terms of meeting the needs of the children's developmental needs. (E4\_54-59)*

"Expert" two, a FS trainer, also recognised the need for children's development to be encouraged and facilitated:

*I suppose it's a case of making sure each area of development and each area of learning and play is available to those children. So it's having that variety of activities, that variety of resources available so that they can explore in their play and have different experiences depending on where they are and using language or using their bodies or using their mathematical skills. (E2\_62-66)*

This breadth of opinions indicates that there is a need within the environment to ensure that resources are purposefully provided in line with children's developmental needs.

#### **7.4.1x: Opportunity for collaboration**

Resources that provide the opportunity for children to work together and co-operate in their play were highlighted as necessary by participants, as one parent stated:

*Also being with a lot of other children. I mean that's the whole reason people send their kids to nursery as well is that they can interact with the other children. (PA7S4\_28-30)*

This collaboration and interaction requires the resources and environment to facilitate this, and participant two from setting four recognised the need for resources to encourage this collaboration and how this may impact on SLD:

*With lots of team work going on with how they're going to build something and then they may all talk to one another. Also I'd say compromising (PA2S4\_113-114)*

A practitioner from setting four talked about the benefits of being within a NE and how this collaboration can differ in this environment:

*I think that also they end up supporting one another in a different way because they're outside in a different environment they're having to perhaps engage more with each other because there isn't perhaps, I don't know, a set game or whatever that they can get absorbed in by themselves so maybe, it's because they haven't got those resources they're having to think in a different way to play. (PA5S4\_129-133)*

This extract indicates that although resources are needed to assist children with collaboration, it does not necessarily need to be resourced in the traditional sense, in that toys and equipment are supplied, but can

also be enhanced by having resources that are naturally occurring and unplanned. This was also discussed in section 7.4.1iii.

#### **7.4.1xi: Books**

The necessity for books within an environment was a prevalent aspect when discussing HQEs to aid SLD. Ten respondents included books within their three most important things for a SL rich environment (table 1, appendix 9) and six participants stated that books were essential to ensure an overall HQE (table 6, appendix 9). A practitioner from setting one stated:

*....my perfect environment would be rich of books, cards, magazines, newspapers and they don't have to be related to the child's level. They could be anything, they could see everything - things wider. (PA1S1\_129-131)*

A parent from setting four talked about the importance of books to him as a parent, and for his children, and said, in the context of promoting SL:

*We have read to our children from the year dot, and a lot. And they still, you know every night before bed they have at least two or three stories and they'll usually sit with one or both of us and that is a sacrosanct time. And again from a very, very early age they'll be remembering the words in the books way before they could read. And they'll be telling the story ahead of us, with their favourite books. (PA1S4\_208-210)*

#### **7.4.1xii: Conclusion to aspects concerning resources.**

As a result of the findings above, the aspects concerning resources were clearly identified as essential to assist young children's SLD. The next section that emerged from thematic analysis, was to focus on environmental features and the findings regarding this element will now be presented.

#### **7.4.2: Environment**

Within the theme of environment there were 10 elements that emerged, and these can be seen in the mind map below:

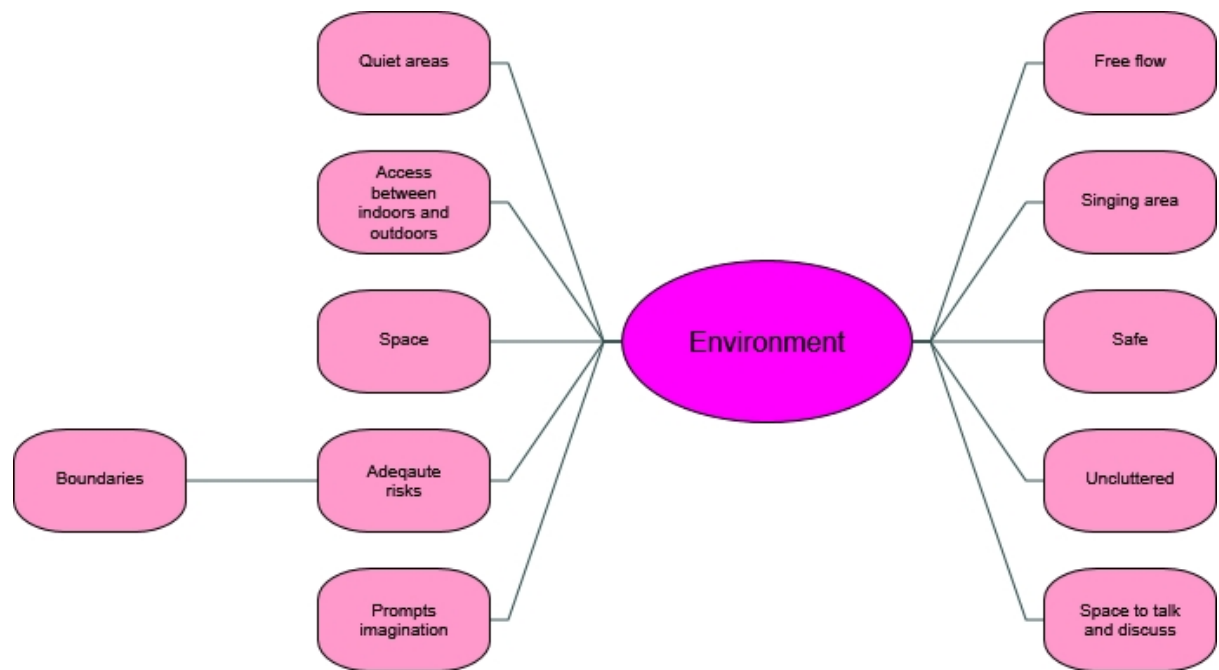


Fig.7.8: Mind map indicating prevalent elements within environment theme.

The 10 elements identified in fig.7.8, will now be explored in further detail.

#### 7.4.2i: Quiet areas

When considering what constituted a HQE to support SL, participants reported that there was an importance to include inviting and quiet spaces to allow children the space to think and to talk. Nine participants reported this to be within their three top aspects when designing a perfect environment to promote SL (table 1, appendix 9). The following excerpts show what participants said about quiet areas:

*So I think the den part's quite important, because I think it's somewhere where they can take themselves off to. You know, if everything gets a bit too much, or it's like they are in this little world that they go into and they just want to go and have a minute. Yeah, I think that's quite important as well. (PA7S3\_182-185)*

*A quiet area. So, but more than, so not just one little room off somewhere but an area that's a reasonable size and in there you had those sort of nice, calming, sort of, you could set up little dens and things, with, not just books, books is something good but just things that are going to appeal and for children to come in and have a quiet time. (E5\_143-148)*

These statements indicate that a quiet area is needed to allow children to reflect and that it does not need to necessarily be restricted to a specific area of the environment, however a den that can be constructed in any environment would suffice for the purposes of reflection and processing.

#### **7.4.2ii Free-flow**

Respondents reported that the ability to move freely around the environment, with easy access to resources and experiences as required, should be provided within a HQE. Seven participants stated that this was one of the most important factors when questioned about their perfect environment, with one parent from setting two stating:

*I would like to see a bit of free flow actually. A bit of indoor, a bit of outdoor, I think. If it could be perfect I think there would be an opportunity for children to move between the two, having some areas which clearly can't be outdoor because they need to be....like books, although books can be outdoors, but having an area where it's inside but then they can move to outdoors with free will. I think that would be... and having, I think physical things as well to play. (PA6S2\_479-484)*

This links to how children access and transition from the indoors to outdoors, and vice versa.

#### **7.4.2iii: Access between indoors/outdoors**

In addition to children being able to access resources freely, it was deemed important by participants that children have the ability to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environments. One parent stated:

*Different spaces. So having the ability to go from indoor to outdoor. Having the natural environment as well.....to be able go to between one and the other and just simultaneously use them all. That would be perfect for me. (PA3S4\_110-114)*

A parent from setting four talked about one of the reasons she chose the setting for her child, recognising this to be the perfect environment for them:

*So for instance here its free-flow and P wants to go outside then she could and I thought that's perfect because she can actually come in and out when she wants so it's, for her it's the perfect*



*environment to be in because it's just what she would like, it's what she wants and on a day to day... (PA7S4\_79-82)*

#### **7.4.2iv: Singing area**

Music, and opportunities to enhance language through singing, was recognised by participants as an element that would be beneficial within the play and learning environment. The benefits of these were viewed as being:

*Music is a good one. They tend to do that as well. It gets them talking and happy and smiley. We do dance here, yoga, meditation. That gets them talking. (PA5S3\_206-208)*

*Singing. I think there probably should be quite a lot of singing. And rhymes to try and help them. (PA8S4\_78-79)*

This recognition of importance of a singing area was noted accordingly.

#### **7.4.2v: Space**

The concept of space to allow children to move freely and explore the area as children required was highlighted as important by participants. Fig.7.9 indicates how the opinion differs depending on the environment:

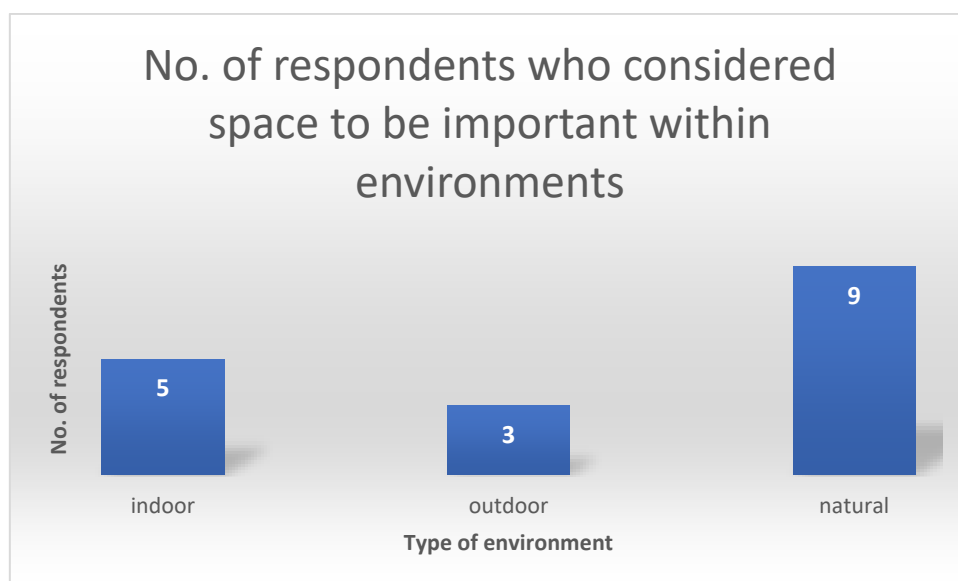


Fig.7.9: No. of respondents who considered space to be important within environment.

Fig.7.9 indicates that nine participants felt that the NE should provide space to be of good quality, compared to five stating that it was necessary within the IC and three within the OC.

A parent from setting three however stated that the definition of spaces was not necessary, the space being the most important aspect, to allow the freedom. They said:

*As much space as possible again and lots of just potential for them just be, to run free and to play and so whether that would....You know separate areas don't necessarily worry me so much. I think they can make their own play and I don't think they need, this is where you play sand, this is this. (PA8S3\_81-84)*

#### **7.4.2vi: Safe**

Safety and security featured in some participants discussions, although only when discussing the indoor environment (n=4) and the OC (n=4) (tables 2 and 3, appendix 9). It was not a factor when discussing the NE.

When talking specifically about the IC, a parent from setting one stated:

*....inside.... ..more the softer plastics, the softer stuff that's not going to really injure, or potentially injure children.....that's what I think indoor play stuff is this safe, soft, softer stuff. That's not to say you can't jump off the sofa and hurt yourself or that sort of thing really. But varying type of activities and lots of different textures and things like that really. (PA7S1\_59-64)*

"Expert" four considers the importance of safety from an Ofsted inspector's perspective:

*And also you've got an area of the physical environment, is it safe? Is everything arranged in a way that children have enough space to move around to be able to learn (E4\_70-72)*

In contrast to these discussions around safety, participants also felt that children should have exposure to adequate risks.

#### **7.4.2vii: Adequate risks/boundaries**

Although participants recognised the need for children to be safe, as discussed above, there was also a realisation that children need exposure to an element of risk, particularly when discussing the NE, with 14

respondents stating that a quality NE would need to provide opportunity for children to engage in and experience risk. One parent defined the concept of adequate risk by stating:

*yeah it's an environment which allows children to sort of stretch themselves but without breaking themselves (laughter). So allowing some risk I think is good, you know, but obviously yes, as long as it's controlled or is managed effectively, I think.*  
(PA7S1\_145-148)

There was a realisation that risks need to be assessed however respondents believed that these risk assessments should not be restrictive. This was confirmed by one parent, who stated:

*I think what I really like is the level of trust and responsibility these children here are being given from a very early age. You know, they're not wrapped in cotton wool in the traditional sense. There are obviously all the normal risk assessments and everything else but it's a permissive regime rather than a prohibitory regime. You very rarely hear, you know, "Stop, don't" and all the rest of it. They'll actually be told the right way to make a fire. How to be safe around a fire. How to use, you know, a hammer and whatever it is. Stuff which sometimes there's a moment where you think oh my God three and four year olds are learning how to make fire (laughter) but you know what? The environment that they're being given that trust and responsibility in is a very protective and supportive environment and you see them grow in their own confidence. I mean it's absolutely fantastic. You know, so we've been hugely pleased with that.* (PA1S4\_137-147)

#### **7.4.2viii: Uncluttered**

Earlier discussions (section 7.4.1vi) highlighted the need for a wide variety of resources to be within the environment to assist children's play and learning, however it is also important, from participants' perspectives that the environment is not cluttered, or over stocked so that the environment remains attractive and exciting.

When talking about what was important to them in an environment, a practitioner from setting one said:

*I think on the top of my list is uncluttered. Uncluttered with enough resources to capture a child's imagination, to engage them*

*in their play but not too much so as to overwhelm it. (PA4S1\_59-61)*

Another participant, a parent, agreed, and stated:

*....but also that they have lots of resources. Not too many resources that it's absolutely, that they're going to go sprouting from one thing to another all the time but things that they can really use imaginatively. (PA3S4\_34-36)*

Both statements refer to the need for children's imagination to be prompted.

#### **7.4.2ix: Prompts imagination**

Although the concept of encouraging children's imagination was only recognised by participants as necessary when discussing OCs (n=4) and NEs (n=3), the benefits to SL were noted. A practitioner from setting four articulated the benefits to SL when prompting imagination as follows:

*They still play with sticks and they still play with mud but they haven't got all the toys and the equipment that is always prescribed to be used in a certain way, whereas if it's totally natural they have to think differently and it's not as prescriptive so they just literally, you can see different aspects of how they learn and their language and all the rest of it because it's not something that they're using in a certain way. (PA5S4\_40-45)*

Children in their responses also indicated the use of imagination, specifically within the NE (n=4). This was discussed in section 7.3.3.

#### **7.4.2x: Space to talk and discuss**

In addition to the requirement for space (7.4.2v) in which to move freely and explore, there was also a recognition that space for children to talk and discuss was essential.

A practitioner from setting one highlighted why they believed this was important to help with SLD by stating:

*I think spaces. To kind of ....to go off, to be with a group but away from the larger groups so they can have chance to converse freely amongst each other and not feel like they're not being listened in on. (PA4S1\_166-168)*

"Expert" one, a FS trainer, also talked of children needing space to talk where they did not feel that they were being listened to, and stated:

*Where some children unfortunately, they feel judged and I think it just kind of with speech and language, it's just that time of quietness and the opportunities to speak. (E1\_180-182)*

The opportunity to visit spaces where children can talk freely to others was therefore noted to be of importance within a HQE.

#### **7.4.2xi: Conclusion to aspects concerning environment.**

As a result of the findings within this section, the environment aspects were fully considered. The third and final section, from thematic analysis, was to focus on features regarding the atmosphere and the findings regarding this area will now be presented.

#### **7.4.3: Atmosphere**

Within the theme of atmosphere there were six elements identified through the thematic analysis process (appendix 6). Fig.7.10 shows these elements.

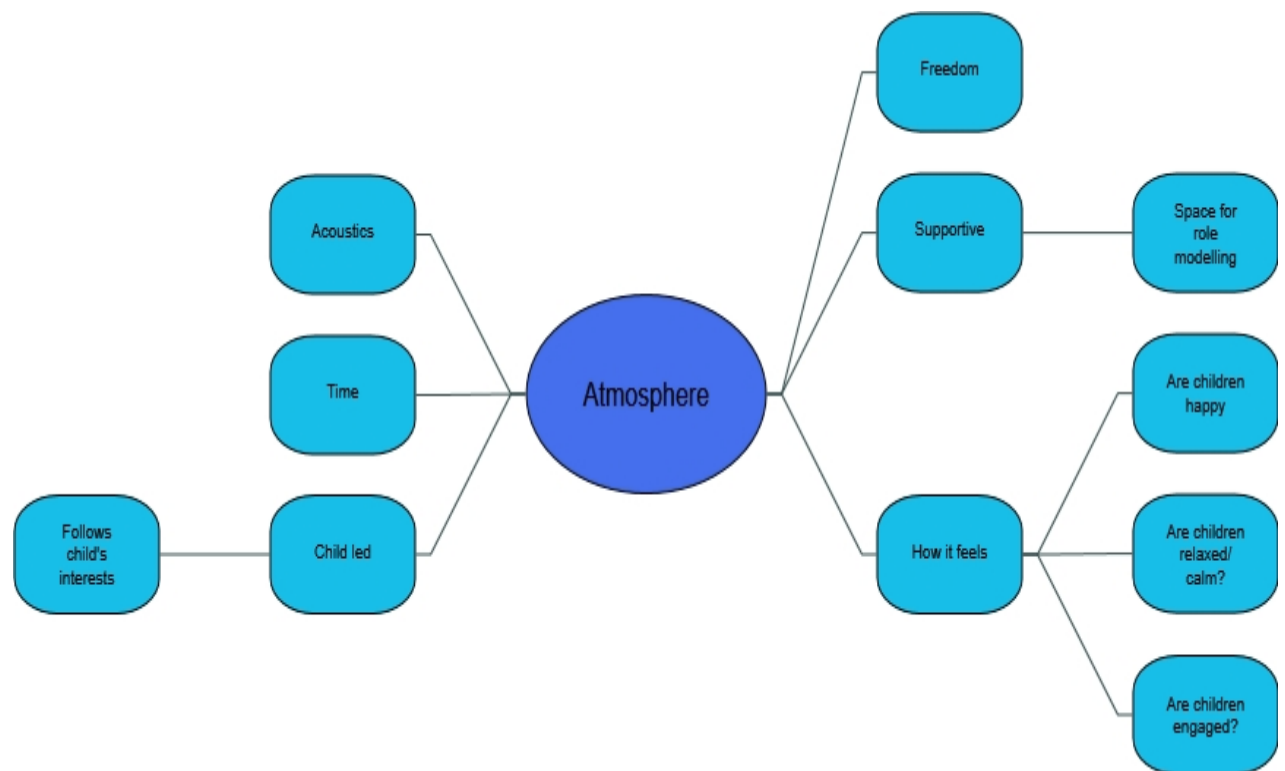


Fig.7.10: Mind map indicating prevalent elements within atmosphere theme.

Fig.7.10 illustrates the six elements highlighted within the theme of acoustics and these elements will now be explored further.

### 7.4.3i: Acoustics

When considering acoustics, or noise levels, it was deemed important to manage noise if children's SL was to be facilitated and supported. A practitioner from setting one said:

*It's difficult because it's like.... I'm not a sound engineer but it's difficult to do but the reason why it keeps on coming to my head is ....you like walk into space and you can be hit by a wall of sound, that feeling and in your head you can't even hear yourself think, as the term goes. So if that's what it's like for an adult, with very well developed communicative skills and some language, for a child who is only young and developing that.... how are they going to.... if we can't hear ourselves think and struggle to really struggle, if I had to really concentrate to listen to somebody. What is it going to be like for them? I think that's why.... that's like the thing I'm holding onto. (PA4S1\_175-182)*

This was also an important consideration for participant two from setting three, a parent who has twins, both of whom have hearing difficulties:

*I suppose from our point of view it would be that it's got good acoustics. Usually it's carpet, curtains, low ceilings, not a big room. Probably now you can't say in a preschool not to be so noisy cos it's..... but it would be that breaking off, ensuring they've got quiet time. (PA2S3\_125-127)*

### **7.4.3ii: Freedom**

Freedom, that is the ability for children to play in a way that suits them, featured within the features participants required for all three environments, with six respondents stating the need within a NE, three within an OC and one within an IC (table 5, appendix 9).

When discussing the outdoor play benefits, a practitioner from setting two said:

*....they're running around, they're saying the words and they're speaking. So you wouldn't get that indoors as much as outdoors. They do that play themselves. It's like child led. They just.... I think they like having the space actually outside, like I say being freer. So like when you go out you give them the boundaries and the rules when you first go, and then they're free to choose what they want to do. (PA4S2\_113-118)*

"Expert" one, a FS trainer and leader, talked specifically about how they viewed boundaries and freedom as a benefit within an environment:

*I just saw the benefit of those boys particularly being outside. They were the boys that were told "no". They were the boys that got told "don't run", "don't raise your voice" and actually why are we telling them not to raise their voice because it's too loud for us and when they're outdoors they can still like raise their voice and it doesn't seem so loud and you're giving them that opportunity, just to be independent.....there's less boundaries, because we have rules and boundaries to keep them safe but if they want to move that rock from the stream to the grass that's fine (E1\_97-105)*

The only person to consider freedom within an indoor environment, a practitioner, said:

*So first of all, freedom for children.....(in) all of them together (meaning all environments). (PA3S3\_43-47)*

This statement was from one of the respondents who felt that there should be no differentiation between the three environments and it is necessary *"to combine it altogether because I think it's really hard, if you are doing it right to do to distinguish between the three"* (PA3S3\_20-21).

#### **7.4.3iii: Time**

Time for children to engage in play and learning and the ability to revisit areas of interest when required, was highlighted by participants as being an element of high quality provision when considering SLD.

Participants highlighted perspectives of the importance of this, for example with these statements:

*I think having time to talk. Like to sit and look at stories, just to talk about your feelings and how..... just have chance to have a conversation with your friends, with your teacher, with a group.* (PA1S3\_244-246)

*Where some children unfortunately, they feel judged and I think it just kind of with speech and language, it's just that time of quietness and the opportunities to speak. It's not just, ok at 9:30 it's group time and that's when you can speak. You can speak aallllll (all) the time. The only time that you have to listen is when you're doing, say a whistle, or we'll say like "guys, stop, come back to the fire circle" and they know that's the time to come back. We don't tell them they have to tidy up 24/7. They can do it when they want. They can go back to it.* (E1\_180-186)

#### **7.4.3iv: Supportive environment**

The nature of the environment and the role modelling and support within it, be that from adults or peers, was deemed as essential by participants. Although concentrating specifically on the environment when questioned, participants could not ignore the fact that the people within the environment were a crucial aspect of a child's SLD. The need for supportive adults was the most frequent answer (n=14) when participants were discussing their most important three features within an environment, and they also featured within each environment when discussing the requirements for high quality provision to assist SL (table 5, appendix 9).



“Expert” four (Ofsted inspector) spoke of a recent inspection, providing anecdotal evidence for her opinion on this matter:

*Staff need to be aware of different ways to support children with communication and language so I think the most important, for me, for the environment to be really rich I think the adults need to be of a really high quality. I think you can be outdoors, you can be in a forest school environment, you can be in somebodies living room and I went to see an outstanding, what was graded outstanding, childminder and her interaction with the children and the children’s vocabulary was really really strong. The children were confident as well with their speech and they could communicate their needs and this was just her lounge so you know, when you look at the common factors of settings I’ve been into, the settings are very different but the quality of the adult is the most important part.*  
(E4\_122-131)

This participant went on to acknowledge that the interaction of peers, and the scaffolding and support from other children is equally important:

*Well in, from what I’ve seen during the inspections and also bringing my knowledge of being in practice, any environment where there are lots of opportunities for children to play and work with each other and where they’re able to problem solve and think about things together and I think often, in classroom situations, in very structured environments, in schools, in our reception classes sometimes that is outdoors more often than not. And I think forest schools in lots of provisions that I’ve been into over the last year, have very much been used as an opportunity to explore open ended play and as opportunity to observe children without that adult interaction at the same level that it’s been within the classroom*  
(E4\_135-142)

The need for both supportive adults and an environment that facilitates support between peers was acknowledged by participants as a necessary element of a HQE.

#### **7.4.3v: Child led**

Participants thought that there should be opportunities for children to lead their own learning and follow their own interests and a flexible environment to support these opportunities. This view was more prevalent when discussing the IC (n=15), compared to the OC (n=8) and the NE (n=7) (table 5, appendix 9).

A parent from setting four stated:

*But it's just, it's back to, again I think it goes back to the sort of responsibility of what the children are interested in and following what their interests are and treating them as having the capacity to learn this stuff from a very early age and not thinking you just play with a doll or a truck. You know, that's what I really like about this place. They stretch the children. (PA1S4\_247-251)*

"Expert" three, an author on communication, emphasised the need for this child led approach to be present across all environments:

*And so why are we compartmentalising inside, outside, maths things...you know it's got to flow. You've got to have a selection of stuff that's relevant and interesting within an environment that offers different contexts for learning and where children have choice, and an active, involved, engaged bunch of adults.....And that balance...it's as simple as that....we over complicate it. (E3\_186-197)*

In addition to all the features above that were identified through thematic analysis, participants were also asked how a HQE made them feel. The results of this are presented below.

#### **7.4.3vi: How does the environment feel?**

When questioned about how a HQE made them feel, participants tended to find this answer the hardest to articulate. At first, they often discussed what they would expect to see, with regards to how the children appeared emotionally, rather than the feeling that good quality could produce.

When questioned further however, the results were as follows:

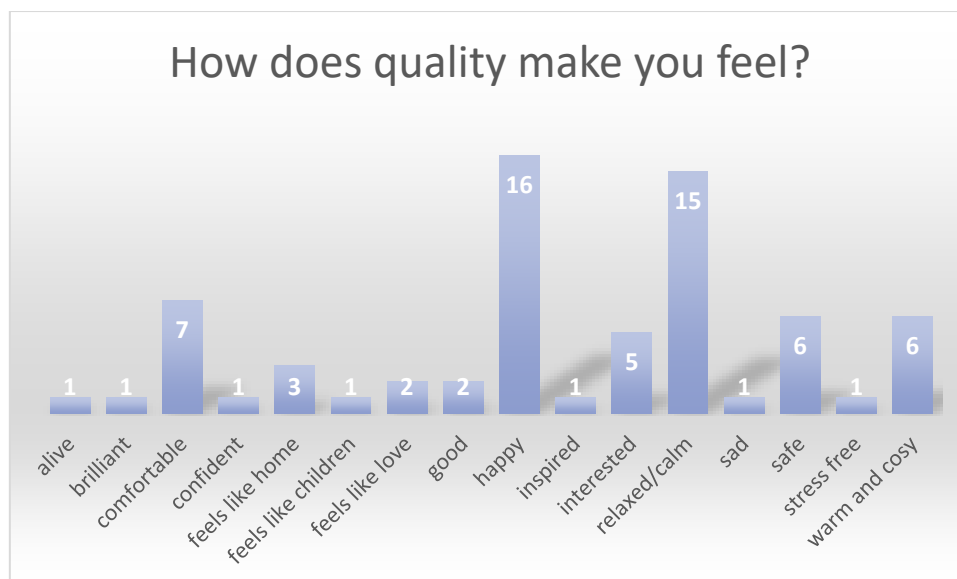


Fig 7.11: How does quality make you feel?

Fig. 7.11 above indicates that participants, when walking into a HQE, found this made them feel happy (n=16) and relaxed and calm (n=15), however at the same time they related this to the children and how the children within the setting appeared to be feeling. Statements such as the following illustrate this point further:

*Practitioner: Children will be happy. It will be a happy environment. They're engaged in their play. Staff are happy. The place is reasonably clean...*

*Interviewer: And does that make you feel happy?*

*Practitioner: Yes, if you felt happy yeah. So if you are at ease, you felt the children are happy. Then that makes you feel relaxed and think that this is a good place to be. (PA4S2\_182-188)*

*It was calm. It was peaceful and it was just like, I felt like when I walked in here with B I could've cried because I felt like, oh it's everything you'd want as a child. (PA7S3\_201-203)*

When asked about how the "best nursery in the whole world" would make them feel, most children agreed with the adults and stated that they would be "happy" or "good" (appendices 24 to 27), although one child did state that it would still make him feel "sad when mummy goes" (appendix 26)

#### **7.4.3vii: Conclusion to aspects concerning the atmosphere**

As a result of the findings presented regarding the features of the final theme, atmosphere, it was possible to consider aspects that were deemed to be important within this theme.

#### **7.5: Responses from different categories of stakeholders**

Although this research did not aim to differentiate between different categories of stakeholders, it was useful to compare the responses of different participants based on their type; parent, practitioner, child or "expert". The comparative results can be seen in appendix 9. The main points to note from this comparison are as follows:

- Practitioners were much more focussed on children's development
- Parents mentioned cleanliness more than other respondents
- Parents raised the importance of supportive adults
- Children talked about feeling "happy" within a HQE, practitioners discussed feeling "relaxed and calm", and parents felt "comfortable"
- Within an outdoor environment there was a different emphasis on what should be provided

These points are now discussed in further detail.

When defining the environments, practitioners talked much more about the indoor environment being there to aid development (n = 5 out of 10) and being divided into areas (n = 10 out of 13). Practitioners also were more aware of the structure that an indoor environment provided (n = 6 out of 11). Parents talked about the cleanliness of the environments, with the parents talking about the indoors being sterile (1 out of 2 occurrences) and the OC being less sterile than the indoors (3 out of 4 responses). The other response in both areas was from an "expert". Practitioners did not therefore consider cleanliness to be a defining feature of a HQE.

When asked what the three most important elements were to assist SLD, more than half of the parents (n = 7 out of 13 (54%)) and more than half

of the “experts” (n = 3 out of 5 (60%)) thought that supportive adults were essential. Practitioners did not rate this as highly with only 4 of the 16 participants discussing this (25%). The highest-ranking response from practitioners was provocations (n = 7 out of 16 (44%)).

In response to the question regarding how a HQE made them feel, children’s most popular answer was “happy”, with two of the four settings producing that response (50%). This was also the most popular response from practitioners, coming equal to “relaxed and calm” with both of these responses coming from 50% of total number of practitioners. The most popular response from parents was that a HQE made them feel comfortable, with 6 out of 13 reporting this to be the case (46%).

Participants were asked to state what they felt made a HQE within the indoors, outdoors and within a NE. When considering the IC, the children talked most about the resources and also about natural resources. In fact, ‘resources’ was the most talked about aspect participants thought to be required for the IC by all categories of respondents.

In the OC there was also a focus on the need for resources and natural resources from the children, and there was a recognition from the children that the OC provided an opportunity for physical play. Both practitioners and parents reported most that there was a need for a variety of experiences within this outdoor environment to support children’s SLD.

When considering what made a NE a HQE with regards to SLD, practitioners most frequently cited the variety of experiences (n = 10 out of 16 respondents), whereas the most common response from parents was that children should be exposed to some element of risk (n = 6 out of 13 respondents). Children on the other hand, covered a wide range of things, with equal importance, that they believed are needed in the NE. They listed wildlife, natural resources, opportunity to play with others, to use their imagination and the need for familiar experiences within this

environment as essential. The NE prompted a higher number of responses from the children than any other environment, with 24 responses concerning the NE compared with 18 in respect of the IC and 17 about the OC.

Throughout the responses it is noted that there was little agreement between the “experts”, with them all highlighting different areas of importance and offering differing views and opinions as to what constitutes a HQE to aid SLD.

## **7.6: Conclusion to phase one findings**

This chapter has presented the findings from the first phase of this research with an aim of answering the research questions:

- RQ1: In the field of early childhood in England, are there distinctive features of an IC environment, an OC environment and a NE, according to stakeholders? If so, what are these features?
- RQ2: What are the impacts of the different environments on the quality of young children’s utterances?

This chapter has described clearly how the findings have provided definitions and distinctive features of each environment (RQ1) and has discussed in detail what participants deem important within such environments to provide a HQE to aid in the development of young children’s utterances (RQ2). This was phase one of the research.

The chapter that follows discusses how and why these findings were used to compile a quality framework, how this framework was trialled and the results of the pilot, this being phase two of the research.

## Chapter 8

### Phase two findings: The development and pilot of the quality assessment framework

#### 8.1: Introduction

Extant literature within chapter 3 indicated that there is a need for a quality rating scale that is transferable between different play and learning environments, to assess the quality of such an environment for aiding young children's SLD. My previous study also highlighted this need (Richardson and Murray, 2016). Additionally, it has been discussed previously in this thesis that, although the universal nature of measurements of quality is contested, there is a requirement to assess the quality of early learning environments with a view to how any environment helps SL. The adoption of interactionism as a theoretical framework (Tomasello, 2003), as this study has done, reinforces the need for such a rating scale. It has been asserted that children need to interact with both the environment and those within it to enhance their development (section 2.2.3) and due to the importance of SL on future life chances (Roulstone *et al.*, 2010; Law *et al.*, 2010; Clegg *et al.*, 2005), I argue that those interactions should happen within an environment that is identified as high-quality.

The previous chapter presented the findings from semi-structured interviews regarding stakeholders' perspectives on high-quality learning environments with a view to supporting young children's SLD. These participants recognised the need for a HQE to support SLD and expressed their views on what this HQE should look like. This chapter utilises the findings from these participants, and answers research question three (RQ3), being:

What elements should be included in a framework to distinguish features of learning environments that may affect young children's SLD?

This chapter then discusses how phase one findings were utilised to develop a transferrable quality assessment framework (TQAF) with a view to addressing study objective 3:

To devise a framework that identifies features of early learning environments that may affect young children's SLD.

This chapter also documents the pilot of the TQAF and reports on the findings from that pilot process.

## **8.2: Environmental definitions for use within the TQAF**

Based on the findings detailed in section 7.3 it is concluded that it was possible to define these three environments using distinctive features.

Participants were asked to define an IC, an OC and a NE and, as a result of the findings presented (see 7.3), the TQAF definitions were established. Due to the wide range of nodes that were generated, a decision was made to include those which gained more than six responses (18% of respondents) within the definitions.

An IC was defined by participants, for the purposes of the TQAF as:

A play and learning environment that is contained and has limited exposure to the natural elements. This environment is likely to be divided into areas of development, is structured and is designed to promote learning. Toys and resources will be within this environment to aid learning. (appendix 29, page 4)

This view aligns with the views of MacBlain (2014) who reports that an indoor environment is that which will have a great emphasis on learning outcomes, with pre-determined goals. The requirement for toys and resources to facilitate this learning, it could be said, is what leads the 'instructive learning environment' (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2002:12) and may therefore be a crucial aspect of the indoor learning environment.

As indicated in chapter 2, extant literature indicates that the OC environment in England has tended to have become an extension of the IC (Isaacs, 2012). This view was confirmed by the respondents in this study and formed the main element of definition of the OC. In addition to



the OC being an extension to the indoors, it was also highlighted, and therefore incorporated into the definition that the OC was likely to provide more opportunity for physical activity. This also is the predominant theme within extant literature concerning assessment of the benefits of outdoor play (BERA/TACTYC, 2014; Fjortoft, 2004).

The definition of an OC therefore, as defined by participants, for the purposes of the TQAF is:

This environment is generally an extension to the indoor classroom and is therefore likely to have similar resources and experiences as the indoors, although these resources may be more natural (not manufactured). It is more of an open space than the indoors though so has exposure to the elements and has more opportunity for physical activities (appendix 29, page 4)

When considering a NE, participants defined this, for the purposes of the TQAF as follows:

This could be a forest school, woodland, beach or similar environment. This is not a manmade environment and the resources and experiences here are generally those found to be naturally occurring within that environment. Those visiting this environment will be fully exposed to the natural environment and will experience a connection with nature through exposure to the elements, the surroundings, resources and wildlife. (appendix 29, page 4)

This definition confirms in part the work of Wellings (2012:9) which states this environment should provide access to 'a natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world' and, although Wellings does not expand on his definition of the 'natural world', the participants in this study have expanded on that definition and provided clarity about what that natural world will expose the children to. This definition only partly confirms Wellings' definition however, as there is a recognition in the definition, reached by the participants within this study, that it is not the 'natural wooded environment' (Wellings, 2012:9) that is essential, but more the access to

the natural resources and experiences that are available within the NE, wherever that may be.

These three definitions were therefore used within the TQAF for clarity for those administering the rating scale.

### **8.3: The assessment elements of the TQAF**

Using the three themes identified from the thematic analysis (appendix 6); resources, environment and atmosphere, three sections were decided upon for the TQAF. Within each of these themes the elements were presented that were gleaned from the interview responses and were identified in the previous chapter (Table 8.1).

Table 8.1: The elements within each theme of the TQAF

<b>Resources</b>	<b>Environment</b>	<b>Atmosphere</b>
1.1 Provocations	2.1 Quiet areas	3.1 Acoustics
1.2 Mark making materials	2.2 Free-flow	3.2 Freedom
1.3 Natural resources/wildlife	2.3 Access between indoors/outdoors	3.3 Time
1.4 Promoting physical activity	2.4 Singing area	3.4 Supportive environment – space for role modelling
1.5 Sensory items/allowing mess	2.5 Space	3.5 Child led/follows children's interests
1.6 Variety of resources	2.6 Safe	3.6 How does the environment feel?
1.7 Familiar/Real life experiences	2.7 Adequate risks/boundaries	
1.8 Transportable resources/loose parts	2.8 Uncluttered/appropriate amounts	
1.9 Encourage development	2.9 Prompts imagination	
1.10 Opportunity for collaboration	2.10 Space to talk and discuss	
1.11 Books		

As Table 8.1 shows, there were 27 elements that were considered by participants to contribute to a high-quality play and learning environment that supports young children's SL. After undertaking the thematic analysis (appendix 6), any responses that had three or more occurrences were included within the TQAF and were considered significant enough to warrant further exploration. Although there was a vast range of different aspects that were identified by respondents ( $n = 48$ ) it was neither possible, nor was it appropriate, to include all. Silverman (2017) states that, when selecting data, it is the responsibility of the researcher to determine what level of sample should be included. Three occurrences from 63 respondents equated to 5% and this was felt to be appropriate that this level of consensus be considered on the basis of significance.

This range of responses confirms, as discussed in chapter 3, the subjectivity of the concept of quality (Reed, 2012; Dahlberg *et al.*, 2013; Pence and Moss, 1994). Many different responses were received when discussing what participants perceived to be necessary elements that constitute a HQE ( $n=48$ ). However, there was also a consensus in 27 areas and it is this consensus that was used to form the elements to be included within the TQAF.

It was important that those using this framework were able to assess each area accordingly. These were presented in no particular hierarchy as, for the purposes of the TQAF, all elements carry equal weighting. By ensuring that all elements carry equal rating it is the aim that no bias or pre-determined views were inflicted upon the assessor. Although the words and phrases used within the TQAF were those which occurred regularly in interview transcripts, the words chosen for each element may not necessarily carry universal meaning and therefore the words which required definition were placed within a glossary at the end of the TQAF to ensure consistency in assessment. The elements that were included within the TQAF will now be explored in more detail, with links made to extant literature discussed in previous chapters.

## **8.4: How each element links with 'the field'**

### **8.4.1: Theme one: Resources**

Concerning the theme of *Resources*, 11 aspects were identified by participants as necessary for a HQE that supports SLD. These are now discussed further.

#### **8.4.1i: Provocations**

Provocations, for the purposes of the TQAF, were defined as *items that provoke conversation, thought, curiosity and questioning. They are likely to be things that are different and will therefore prompt interest* (glossary of TQAF – appendix 29). These were deemed to be essential to assist SLD (n=13), which resonates with the Reggio Emilia approach, where the environment is the third educator (Strong-Wilson and Ellis, 2007). Strong-Wilson and Ellis (2007) attest that the notion of the 'third educator' is about 'expecting the unexpected' (2007:42) and that provocations are often the catalysts for this perspective of the environment. Cadwell (2003) believes provocations bring to the environment an element of excitement and make it feel 'electric and alive' (Cadwell, 2003:118). This was the belief of the participants in this research also and this element was therefore deemed necessary for inclusion in the TQAF.

#### **8.4.1ii: Mark making materials**

When looking back to the literature discussed in previous chapters, there is no direct mention of mark making materials being essential to promote SLD within an environment, however participants felt this to be necessary. It could be argued that this need for mark making derives from the need to learn from new experiences (O'Brien, 2009), to be engaged (Jarman; 2007; Gosling, 2016) and to be given the space to be creative and to foster self-expression (DfE, 2017; United Nations, 1989). It was therefore included as a component within the TQAF and, although it was deemed important by participants that mark making materials should be available

within the environment (n=8), there was a realisation throughout discussion around mark making that this may not be in the traditional sense, with paper and pens, in the context of a NE. This was reinforced by one participant who said, "*so like instead of just pens you could use like twigs to write with*" (PA5S3\_232-233). This point therefore needed to be accounted for when compiling the TQAF.

#### **8.4.1iii: Natural resources/wildlife**

Within all environments the TQAF has included an element that assesses the access to natural resources and wildlife. Levey (2011) argues that the most important element of language enhancement should be that the language reflects the environment in which the child is situated. It could therefore be asserted that including natural resources and wildlife within an IC is not reflective of the environment. This was recognised by participants as nobody felt this to be essential within an IC (compared to 11 in OC and 18 in the NE). However, the concept of the TQAF is that it is applicable to all environments and it was therefore a necessary component to include within the framework. If there are benefits to be had from access to natural resources and wildlife (Hartle and Johnson, 1993; Olsen, 2013), then it could be argued that this is necessary within all environments regardless.

#### **8.4.1iv: Promoting physical activity**

Extant literature heralds the benefits of physical activity for young children (BERA/TACTYC, 2014; Fjortoft, 2004; British Heart Foundation, 2015) and the ability to be physical impacting on the amount of spoken word by young children (McGilchrist, 2009; Campos *et al.*, 2000; Goddard Blythe, 2000). Participants highlighted the need for children to have opportunities to be physical, in the gross motor sense, as they felt this necessary for communication (n=8). To add further to this area, participants articulated that this communication was thought to stem from the kind of play that the physical activity promoted, such as role play, imaginary play and socialisation, agreeing with Piaget and Inhelder

(1969). These links were clearly articulated by participants and therefore the area of physical development, particularly focussing on gross motor skills and exertion, was therefore necessary for inclusion with the TQAF.

#### **8.4.1v: Sensory items/allowing mess**

The extant literature notes that NEs are likely to facilitate messier play, which can lead to deeper levels of exploration (Sutterby and Frost, 2006) benefitting language development, and Gascoyne (2017) identifies this type of play to be beneficial to support communication within early years settings. Participants were insistent that this was a necessary aspect within the outdoor and NEs (n=5), to promote SL. There was no mention of this by participants with regards to the quality of indoor environments, however it is argued that this should be a consideration within all environments in equal measure if quality is being promoted throughout a setting. The TQAF features this element with this in mind.

#### **8.4.1vi: Variety of resources**

Participants highlighted the need for a variety of resources within any environment, but with most emphasis on the indoor provision (n=24 for indoor, compared to n=13 in outdoor and 4 in NE). The literature within this area offers different opinions on the need for variety, with Kadis (2007) stating a need for a variety and McCartney (1984) disagreeing and suggesting that this variety of resources did not influence SLD. Both participants and the literature agree (DfE, 2017; Christie and Roskos, 2006) however, that the resources should meet the needs of the child, and should prompt engagement. The wording for this area in the TQAF therefore reflects this.

#### **8.4.1vii: Familiar/real life experiences**

In contrast to point 8.4.1i, that states the need for “different” resources that prompt curiosity, it was also identified by participants that there needed to be an element of familiarity within an environment to prompt

SLD (n=9). The literature reviews highlight the need for a HQE to be culturally relevant and to be reflective of children's home lives (McCartney, 1984; Department of Education and Training, 2009; DfE, 2017) and the responses from the participants reflected that. Therefore, this needed to be included within the TQAF.

#### **8.4.1viii: Transportable resources/loose parts**

Participants were clear that transportable, open ended resources were necessary within an environment to promote SLD (n=14). Participants thought that providing resources with no pre-determined purposes, that can be moved between environments, could promote imagination and exploration. This point concurs with Whitebread *et al.* (2015) and Pramling Samuelsson and Fleer's view (2008) that for playful learning to occur there is a need for open ended play. This was therefore an element that needed representation within the TQAF.

#### **8.4.1ix: Encourage development**

The breadth of participant opinions within this area (n=31) indicated that there is a need within all environments to ensure that resources are purposefully provided in line with children's developmental needs, and the TQAF therefore needed to reflect this. Although participants were more focussed on this point within the indoor and OC environments, there also existed an awareness that this was necessary, however maybe indirectly, within a NE. This area is a statutory requirement for settings within England (DfE, 2017) and whether participants raised this as necessary or not it would have needed to feature within this framework for use in England, in some way, to ensure that settings could adhere to guidelines. It was obvious though that participants were very aware of the need to follow guidelines and ensure that environments were equipped to meet learning outcomes.

#### **8.4.1x: Opportunity for collaboration**

Participants recognised that for children's SL to be enhanced, children needed to interact with others (n=3), aligning with the interactionist approach adopted throughout this study (Tomasello, 2003). Participants

highlighted the need for the environment and resources to facilitate this collaboration, but not necessarily in the traditional sense, with planning and purchasing, but also having resources that are unplanned and naturally occurring. It is therefore essential that any environment for play and learning provides the opportunity for collaboration and the TQAF required an element that reflected this requirement.

#### **8.4.1xi: Books**

The final element identified by participants with regards to resources, was the need for books in the environment (n=10). Although there was no particular mention of where these books should be found, it was classed as essential that books were present. The literature focuses mainly on the need for books to be shared, and an interaction around the literature, to assist SL (Doyle and Bramwell, 2006; Krishnan and Johnson, 2014) and this was not necessarily a requirement when participants were covering this area – just that books were available. It could be suggested that having books within the environment will inevitably lead to an interaction, and hence assist SL. The TQAF needed to reflect participants' views and therefore an element was included concerning the presence of books.

#### **8.4.2: Theme two: Environment**

The *Environment* theme included ten aspects which participants deemed necessary for inclusion within a HQE when encouraging SLD. These will now be explored in conjunction with the literature that has been previously discussed.

##### **8.4.2i: Quiet areas**

Reed (2012:17) states that 'favourable conditions' are required within a quality environment to assist with listening and speaking. As a result of the responses from participants in this study, it is argued that these 'favourable conditions' should include areas where children can be quiet, where they can process their thoughts, and can listen to others with ease. Meaningful dialogue is recognised as being essential (Maccoby, 2007;



Whitebread *et al.*, 2015) and it is asserted that this quiet space is essential for this meaningful dialogue to take place effectively. Participants recognised this as essential (n=9) and they also recognised that this does not necessarily need to be restricted to a specific area of the environment, however something such as a den that can be constructed in any environment would suffice for the purposes of reflection and processing. This point needed to be worded in a manner, within the TQAF, that provided this flexibility.

#### **8.4.2ii: Free-flow**

Being able to move around the environment freely and access resources and experiences as required, was noted by participants as necessary to support SL (n=7). If, as Phillips (2015:4) argues, children should feel that they 'belong in that space....identify with it and have a sense of place for that room' then they should be able to have access to the space and resources that allow them to feel that sense of belonging. This should apply in all environments and the TQAF therefore needed to reflect this requirement. It was also noted that free flow from the indoors to the outdoors was required and that will be discussed in the section below.

#### **8.4.2iii: Access between indoors/outdoors**

If, as asserted earlier in this chapter, it is essential that children's interests are followed, and resources are provided in line with this, then it could also be argued that the environment in which they are in should also follow those interests and dispositions to learn. Gosling (2016) states that the environment should be interesting, and Curtis and Carter (2003) agree and propose that an environment should draw the children in, reflect their interests, and hence encourage them to talk. Therefore, in an ideal world, children should be able to travel between environments and access that which best suits their learning needs at any given time. Participants agreed with this concept, stating that they felt the "*perfect environment*" was one where children could move freely between the

indoors and outdoors (n=11). The TQAF therefore included an element that measured this accessibility.

#### **8.4.2iv: Singing area**

The literature review highlighted the need for exposure to, and participation in, music making and singing from a young age to enhance language skills (Hallam, 2017) and this was also emphasised by participants as a necessary component within a HQE (n=4). This was therefore an element for inclusion within the TQAF.

#### **8.4.2v: Space**

The need for space to allow children to move freely and to explore as required, was also highlighted as a necessary aspect for a HQE (n=5), agreeing with Macmillan (1919) who stated that 'children want space.....that is ample space, is almost as much wanted as food and air' (Macmillan, 1919:10-11). Waller (2009) discusses the need for space within a NE, to develop social interactions and to enhance a sense of belonging. This was acknowledged by participants, who discussed the concept of space most when talking about the NE. Interestingly this point was not discussed as much when considering an OC (n=3, compared to n=5 in the IC and n=9 in the NE). This connects to the views of Olsen (2013:11) who argues that the OC is often the 'after-thought' and the last to be discussed. It may also be that participants felt that space within an OC was an automatic occurrence and therefore did not require specific mention, however this would then also have been the case for the NE. It is therefore more likely that, as Olsen (2013) believes, that the OC in relation to the space does not immediately come to mind. This point also aligns with the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2017), which has a statutory requirement for the amount of floor space needed within the IC, but no equivalent for outdoor space; the only requirement regarding the outdoors is that children have access to it on the daily basis. The findings in the present study therefore align with the

English government directive but in line with Olsen (2013) and Macmillan (1919) space is measured in the TQAF throughout all play and learning environments, an enhancement of the current English requirement.

#### **8.4.2vi: Safe**

It was recognised in chapter 3 that internationally a HQE is one which is safe (UNESCO *et al.*, 2017; Olsen, 2013) as this is in line with a child's basic needs (Maslow, 1943) and as stated in chapter 7, safety and security featured in participants discussions. However, safety was only a consideration when discussing the indoor environment (n=4) and the OC (n=4) (tables 2 and 3, appendix 9), it was not a factor when participants discussed the NE. Although the TQAF needed to reflect this element, it also needed to balance with access to elements of risk and this is discussed further in the following section.

#### **8.4.2vii: Adequate risk/boundaries**

In contradiction to point 8.4.2vi above, participants acknowledged that children should have exposure to an element of risk (n=14), where they should be able to "*stretch themselves but without breaking themselves*" (PA7S1\_145-148). This idea concurs with extant literature that suggests children should have access to elements of risk within their play experiences (Little *et al.*, 2011; Sandseter, 2007; Stephenson, 2003). Although this literature tends to focus on outdoor environments the definition from Stephenson states that risky play is 'attempting something never done before, feeling on the borderline of "out of control" often because of height and speed, and overcoming fear' (2003:36) and suggests this should be encouraged in all play and learning environments. It is noted though that these risks should be appropriate in line with English health and safety guidelines (DfE, 2017) and balance the need for safety (8.4.2vi). The TQAF needed to reflect this delicate balance.

#### **8.4.2viii: Uncluttered/appropriate amounts**

Although participants recognised and discussed (section 8.4.1vi) the need for a variety of resources to prompt children's conversations, they also thought that the environment should not be so overwhelmed by resources to appear cluttered and chaotic (n=3). An appropriate amount of available resources was considered necessary. Although McCartney (1984) argues that the amount of equipment and resources are not influential for children's language, children need the opportunity to revisit play experiences and discover new experiences (O'Brien, 2009). It is therefore recognised that if an environment is cluttered and chaotic then this concept could be very difficult for children. It may not be possible to locate the resources required, or be possible to revisit play, therefore leading to children *not being able to see the wood for the trees*. There was therefore a need for the TQAF to pay heed to this point and include this element for consideration.

#### **8.4.2ix: Prompts imagination**

Extant literature states that children's imagination should be fostered to assist with their SLD (Whitebread *et al.*, 2015; Knight, 2011; Sutterby and Frost, 2006). Participants also highlighted this point as a requirement within a HQE, but with more emphasis on the outdoor (n=4) and NE (n=3), particularly from the children (5 of the 7 responses came from children) where there was a prevalence of imaginary items listed as things that they would expect to find within a NE. It is likely that this is because, unlike the indoor and OC environments, generally there are fewer pre-arranged activities within a NE and therefore they have opportunities for much more imaginary play within that environment. Children show an awareness of this within their responses. It is an area that requires investigation through the TQAF within all environments.

#### **8.4.2x: Space to talk and discuss**

Extant literature recognises that there is a need for an environment that prompts interactions, in order that children can develop conversations and

experiment with language (Tomasello, 2003; Sutterby and Frost, 2006; Bruce, 2004). Practitioners also recognised this to be the case in the present study and asserted that the environment needed to provide that space for children to talk freely together (n=9). This point aligns with Jarman's view (2007), that space be set aside for the encouragement of conversation. However, I argue that there should not be a need for a specific space for this to occur, more that this should be throughout the environment. The TQAF was therefore worded with this in mind.

### **8.4.3: Theme three: Atmosphere**

The *Atmosphere* theme included six aspects that participants regarded as necessary for assessing an environment's capacity to support SLD. These aspects are now discussed alongside the relevant literature.

#### **8.4.3i: Acoustics**

The acoustics of the environment, the sound levels and the ways children can hear and be heard, were highlighted as necessary components of the TQAF (n=3). This attention to acoustics is what Reed (2012:17) was focusing on when considering that a HQE needed 'favourable conditions' in order that children can thrive. It also aligns with Evans (2006) and Marshall and Lewis (2014) who believe that children's cognitive skills are impacted upon negatively if exposed to loud and uncontrollable noise levels. I therefore argue that if children cannot hear, they cannot think and therefore their SL will be affected. The sound levels, or the acoustics of the environment, are therefore a crucial element within the environment, and the TQAF needed to reflect this.

#### **8.4.3ii: Freedom**

Freedom to play without being restricted by too many rules and boundaries was recognised as necessary for a HQE (n=7). Participants recognised however, that there was a need for some boundaries but there was a realisation that these boundaries should not be restrictive to play

and learning. Participants acknowledged that fewer boundaries were more likely in a NE and this aligns with findings related to risk (section 8.4.2vii) where participants felt that the NE was more likely to promote risk taking and adventurous play, showing fewer restrictions within this environment. This element concurs with views of Sutterby and Frost (2006) and Neaum (2012) who believe that children can flourish when fewer boundaries exist and children do not feel restricted by the close supervision of adults. Prochner *et al.* (2008) extend this point by stating there is a need for well-defined boundaries as this results in richer interactions. It should be noted, therefore, that although there is a need for an environment that is not restricted by boundaries, this does not mean *no* boundaries. Another point to note here is although the literature and the participants responses were more focussed on the NE, it is argued, for the benefit of the TQAF, that this aspect should be a point of consideration within any environment. If exposure to risk is an aspect that enhances development, I argue that this should be the case in any environment in which a child plays and learns, not solely within one specific environment.

#### **8.4.3iii: Time**

Leading on from the freedom to play as discussed above, participants also recognised that children need the time to play (n=4). The time to 'wallow' in their play has been previously identified as an essential commodity when developing SL (Bruce, 2011:24; Richardson and Murray, 2016) and participants also recognised this as necessary within a HQE. There was a realisation that routines were necessary, but they should not interrupt the play of the children unnecessarily. Time was therefore an element that needed to be included within the TQAF.

#### **8.4.3iv: Supportive environment – space for role modelling**

The extant literature recognises the need for children's interaction with others as well as the environment (Sylva *et al.* 2004; Tietze *et al.*, 1996) and this needed to be addressed in the TQAF as this was also a common

point raised by participants (n=19). If children are to be encouraged to try new experiences and extend their language they need support of a 'more knowledgeable other' (Vygotsky, 1962) to do so. However, this element should not be restricted to adults within the environment but also to peers. This aspect of high-quality; 'classroom practice....that promotes children's growth and learning' (Ceglowski and Bacigalupa, 2002:88), needed to be included within the TQAF.

#### **8.4.3v: Child led/follows children's interests**

Extant literature suggests that the purpose of a learning environment should be to encourage play, which in turn should encourage learning. Pramling Samuelsson and Fler (2008) assert that the environment and resources should be provided to support children's interests and should be child led. To engage children in play, then, children should be interested and choosing the trajectory of that play. Participants agreed with this notion and acknowledged the need for the environment, and those within it, to be responsive to children's needs (n=5). This was therefore accounted for within the TQAF.

#### **8.4.3vi: How does the environment make you feel?**

Section 7.4.3vi reported that participants found this aspect the hardest to articulate and often discussed what they would expect to see, and how the children would appear emotionally, rather than the feeling that it prompted within themselves. This aspect within the TQAF therefore needed to reflect these responses and it was worded in a manner that assesses the way that the children are feeling in the setting as well as the way that it makes the assessor feel. The way that the responses were received in this area aligns with findings from Berris and Miller (2011) that parents were able to discuss that quality prompted a certain feeling, however found this difficult to articulate further. These discussions also prompted very personal reflections, aligning with Canning (2012) who asserts that discussions around quality are often 'personal and subjective' (2012:78). Although these responses were personal and subjective, there

was still a consensus as to how a HQE made participants feel and this was therefore included in the TQAF.

The way that this assessment framework, the TQAF, was designed to be undertaken will now be discussed.

### **8.5: Method of assessment and application of the TQAF**

When constructing the assessment framework, it was essential that it was designed to be easy to administer and clear in its format. Katz (1994:206) asserts that 'any kind of assessment requires the selection of criteria and the adoption of standards, a standard being a particular level of quality with relation to a criterion.' For the TQAF it was decided to adopt the standards that are the best known within the Early Years sector in England (DfE, 2017), and that is the standards as used by Ofsted; outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate (Ofsted, 2015b). Other assessment tools use a similar format (DfE, 2018) and although the assessments themselves may be deemed as 'a blunt instrument, seeking to reduce the rich diversity and complexity of ECEC to a common standard, measure and outcome' (Moss and Urban, 2017) it is argued that this study was designed to reflect the diversity and complexity of ECEC within the English context. This was therefore not a concern within this project. Although some believe that the imposition of Ofsted style ratings are restrictive and ineffective (Gilroy and Wilcox, 2010; Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2017) the purpose of this tool was different in that it would be used collaboratively and through choice rather than being imposed.

A rubric was therefore constructed to show each element and gave a definition of what an assessor would expect to see within each standard.



Table 8.2: An example of the TQAF layout and construction

	Element	Outstanding (score 4)	Good (score 3)	Requires Improvement (score 2)	Inadequate (score 1)	Not applicable (score 0)
3.1	Acoustics	The noise levels are managed well, at all times. Children are able to be heard and to hear others	The noise levels are managed well most of the time. Children are generally able to be heard and can hear others	The noise levels are high at times and as such children may not always be heard or hear others	The noise levels are too high and children struggle to be heard or hear others	This element is not applicable to this environment
3.2	Freedom	The environment always allows children the freedom to play and learn in a way that suits them. Boundaries exist but they are managed well and as such children are independent in their play	The environment often allows children the freedom to play and learn in a way that suits them. Boundaries exist but they are managed and as such children are mainly independent in their play	The environment sometimes allows children the freedom to play and learn in a way that suits them. Boundaries exist and they are managed in a way that can inhibit children's independent play	The environment does not allow children the freedom to play and learn in a way that suits them. Boundaries exist and restrict children's independent play	This element is not applicable to this environment

Table 8.2 shows an example of the layout and construction of the TQAF. A definition was provided for each score of each element. The highest score definition, that of outstanding, was derived from the findings of the interviews (as presented in chapter 7). The lowest score definition, inadequate, was the converse of the outstanding element, and the good, and requires improvement, were constructed to represent a sliding scale between the two extremes.

It was the intention that the assessor completed this form by reading the description for each element and highlight the definition most appropriate to the quality of environment observed. It was recommended that:

*....the TQAF be administered in conversation with others; not done independently. This conversation should be reflective and analytical*

*and more than one viewpoint is therefore recommended to provide this depth and detail, as well as overcoming any potential bias. (excerpt from page 6-7, appendix 29)*

### **8.5.1: Scoring of the TQAF elements**

This framework, for the purposes of this research, needed a scoring system in order that the different settings and different environments could be compared in numerical form. The TQAF document may however be utilised by settings for setting improvement purposes and in those instances the scoring system would not need to be applied, as the method of completion will naturally highlight areas where there are aspects that need development. This was documented accordingly (page 5, appendix 29).

Instructions for scoring were given within the TQAF (page 5, appendix 29) and stated:

*A scoring system, if required, should allocate the following scores to each element as appropriate:*

<i>Outstanding</i>	<i>Score 4</i>
<i>Good</i>	<i>Score 3</i>
<i>Requires improvement</i>	<i>Score 2</i>
<i>Inadequate</i>	<i>Score 1</i>
<i>Not applicable</i>	<i>Score 0</i>

*It may be, when scoring a particular element, that the assessors feel that the score falls somewhere between two categories. In that instance highlight the document to indicate that and allocate a score in between the two. For example, if it is felt that there are aspects of outstanding and good in one particular element then a score of 3.5 could be awarded.*

*Each element of assessment should be discussed, graded and the relevant box should be highlighted. If a specific element is not applicable to the environment then it should be marked as such. Scoring should then be carried out as follows:*

- Add up the scores allocated to each element to give a total score for the area concerned (i.e. resources, environment or atmosphere). This will give a total score.*

- *Divide the total score between the number of elements that were considered to be applicable (disregard the elements that were felt to be non-applicable)*
- *This score will then relate to the rating as previously discussed*

*When all areas are completed a total score can be calculated to give an overall quality score for the environment, with regards to speech and language encouragement.*

Katz stated that 'a four or five-point continuum for each criterion is likely to be sufficient for most purposes' (1994:206) and this TQAF adopted a four-point scale for ease of usage and to align with the Ofsted grading categories (Ofsted, 2015b). Although criticism of the Ofsted process (Mboyo, 2017; Rosenthal, 2004) and the ratings used by Ofsted (Perryman *et al.*, 2018) has been explored in chapter 3 (section 3.4) it is noted that, although being far from perfect, it is a system that is recognised by settings and parents alike within England (Kazimirski *et al.*, 2008) and for this rating scale to be applicable to settings it needed to represent what is widely known. Checks confirmed that there were no copyright restrictions on this scale (National Archives, 2019). This is therefore the rationale for the criterion being used as such.

### **8.5.2: Definitions of environments**

Through the thematic analysis of interview data, each environment; IC, OC and NE, was defined and a definition given within the TQAF, as discussed in chapter 7. These definitions, along with the glossary at the rear of the document (pages 19-21, appendix 29), were provided so that this document could be accessed and administered by a range of professionals within Early Years contexts in England and there could be a shared understanding of the terms used within.

### **8.6: Pilot of the TQAF**

Once the TQAF was constructed, the draft version (appendix 12) was piloted in the setting that was used for piloting the interviews for phase

one (see 5.4.1.1). This setting had an IC, an OC and a NE, which in this instance was a farm. Again, as in phase one, contamination from this pilot was avoided by not including the collected data in the main results (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). The pilot of the TQAF was undertaken in discussion with the setting owner, Mrs H. Mrs H had also agreed to adopt the role as a research assistant and administer the TQAF alongside me in the participant settings for the main study, so this discussion served two purposes; the pilot of the framework and training of how the assessment tool could be used most effectively when being used in the research context of the sample settings. Hildebrandt (1991:17) discusses the need for research assistants to have an 'intimate knowledge of the community and the culture' in which they are working. As Mrs H is an owner of a setting which operates the three environments and works within the English context of Early Years, it is therefore argued that she possesses the 'intimate knowledge' required and the training given on how to administer the TQAF added to her breadth of knowledge.

#### **8.6.1: Results of the pilot of the TQAF: Document design**

It was found that the TQAF was easy to understand and to administer. The TQAF was administered in three different environments of the pilot setting; IC, OC and NE, and with discussion around each element a consensus was reached. It is recognised that there could be an element of bias in the views taken by Mrs H due to her being the owner of the setting concerned, however as the purpose of the pilot was to mainly consider the effectiveness of the administration of the document this risk was felt to be acceptable and not restrictive to the exercise.

One exception to the clarity of the document was around elements 2.2 and 2.3; "Free flow" and "Access between indoors and outdoors". On discussion we deemed that the wording of these elements caused confusion and led to duplication. We therefore decided that "Free flow" be renamed to "Accessibility" as this element assesses how children are able to move around the environment with easy access to resources and experiences as required, and element 2.3 would continue to be entitled

“Access between indoors/outdoors” but would focus on opportunities for children to flow freely between these environments. The TQAF was adapted accordingly (appendix 29).

Another requirement highlighted by the findings from the pilot was that the form should have a formal space in which to calculate the scoring of the TQAF (Table 8.3).

Table 8.3: An example of revised scoring aspect of TQAF

	Environment one	Environment two	Environment three
a) Total score for atmosphere			
b) No of applicable elements			
c) Average score for atmosphere (a divide by b)			
d) Overall grading for atmosphere			

### **8.6.2: Results of the pilot of the TQAF: Data findings**

Through discussion, the three environments - IC, OC and NE - were scored using the TQAF, and an overall grading calculated. The results of this are now presented.

#### **8.6.2.1: Resources scoring**

The TQAF was used to score the resources within the pilot setting and the results were as follows:

Table 8.4: Scoring of resources elements for pilot setting

	Indoor classroom	Outdoor classroom	Natural environment
a) Total score for resources	37	41	40
b) No of applicable elements	11	11	10
c) Average score for resources (a divided by b)	3.4	3.7	4
d) Overall grading for resources	Good	Good/Outstanding	Outstanding

Table 8.4 shows that the IC was rated as good, the OC rated as good/outstanding and the NE rated as outstanding, with regards to the resources elements. The element that was “not applicable” within the NE was element 1.11, “books”.

### 8.6.2.2: Environment scoring

A similar pattern to the above was identified when scoring the environment elements of the TQAF, as shown in table 8.5:

Table 8.5: Scoring of environment elements for pilot setting

	Indoor classroom	Outdoor classroom	Natural environment
a) Total score for environment	33	37	31
b) No of applicable elements	10	10	8
c) Average score for environment (a divided by b)	3.3	3.7	3.9
d) Overall grading for environment	Good	Good/Outstanding	Outstanding

Table 8.5 shows that, again the NE scored the highest with an average score of 3.9, compared to the IC which scored 3.3 and the OC 3.7. There were two elements within this theme that were not applicable within the NE and they were 2.4; a “singing area”, and 2.8; whether the environment was “uncluttered”.

### 8.6.2.3: Atmosphere scoring

Table 8.6 shows the scoring for all areas to be the same with all environments receiving the maximum score of 4 and being categorised as outstanding. Again, there was one element that was recorded as not applicable within the NE and that was element 3.1; “Acoustics”.

Table 8.6: Scoring of atmosphere elements for pilot setting

	Indoor classroom	Outdoor classroom	Natural environment
a) Total score for atmosphere	24	24	20
b) No of applicable elements	6	6	5
c) Average score for atmosphere (a divided by b)	4	4	4
d) Overall grading for atmosphere	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding

### 8.6.2.4: Total score for TQAF at pilot setting

By combining the results from the above tables this provided an overall score shown in table 8.7:

Table 8.7: Total scoring for pilot setting

	Indoor classroom	Outdoor classroom	Natural environment
a) Overall total score for TQAF (total of all elements)	94	98	91
b) Total no of applicable elements throughout TQAF	27	27	23
c) Overall average score for TQAF (a divided by b)	3.5	3.6	4
d) Overall grading for TQAF	Good/Outstanding	Good/Outstanding	Outstanding

Table 8.7 indicates that the overall score for the pilot setting, as found by completion of the TQAF, showed the NE to be of the highest quality when aiding young children's SLD, with the achievement of the maximum score possible; 4. This gave a classification of "outstanding" for this NE. The IC achieved a score of 3.5 and the OC achieved a 3.6, both environments therefore being rated as "good/outstanding".

It was necessary to compare these findings to the quality of the SL of the children within the environments. To fully test the effectiveness and workability of the TQAF, the children's utterances were therefore recorded and analysed, so that the results could be compared to the results of the TQAF. The results of this are discussed in the following section.

### **8.7: Results from pilot of voice recordings**

In order to capture children's utterances, small video cameras were utilised and were attached to children's clothing by a clip, near to the neckline to maximise on voice recording quality. Permission had been received from six parents, giving a sample size for this pilot of six children. The method of this data collection will now be analysed, and the data collected will also be presented in the sections that follow.

#### **8.7.1: Pilot findings: method of data collection**

The process of piloting the data capture identified some problems with the recording devices and the way that children wore them. They were clipped near to the neckline of the children's clothing, on a t-shirt or



jumper. A problem occurred due to the weight of the devices. They pulled at children's clothing and the children therefore remained conscious of their presence throughout the duration of the recording process. This resulted in the children spending time looking at the cameras, unclipping them from their clothing, pressing the buttons and as a result this obviously interrupted the natural flow of their play. The aim of using cameras such as this was to ensure that they were unobtrusive, and that observation data was not contaminated by the awareness of observation devices. The aim was that observation data were gained in a naturalistic manner and this did not occur at all at this pilot stage.

### **8.7.2: Pilot findings: data**

As a result of the problems identified in the section above regarding the method of data collection, it is recognised that the data collected may not be a true representation of the data which would normally occur within the play and learning environments. The recordings took place in the NE and the IC. Children, on the day of the pilot were not permitted in the OC and the data therefore only represents the two environments. Although six children had permission to participate, only five wanted to wear the cameras and only two of the five recorded data when in the NE. This was due to the cumbersome nature of the cameras (section 8.7.1).

It remained important to analyse this data that was obtained however, to identify at this stage if there were any further issues with the comparison process of the quality of utterances and application of the TQAF. The section that follows therefore presents the analysis of the children's utterances of this pilot setting.

#### **8.7.2.1: Pilot findings: quality of speech within different environments**

Two children of the five (40%) had recordings of utterances within both the IC and the NE that could be transcribed (appendix 30) and analysed using TTR analysis (appendix 31).

The figure below shows the overall TTR for both children, comparing lexical diversity in the IC and the NE:

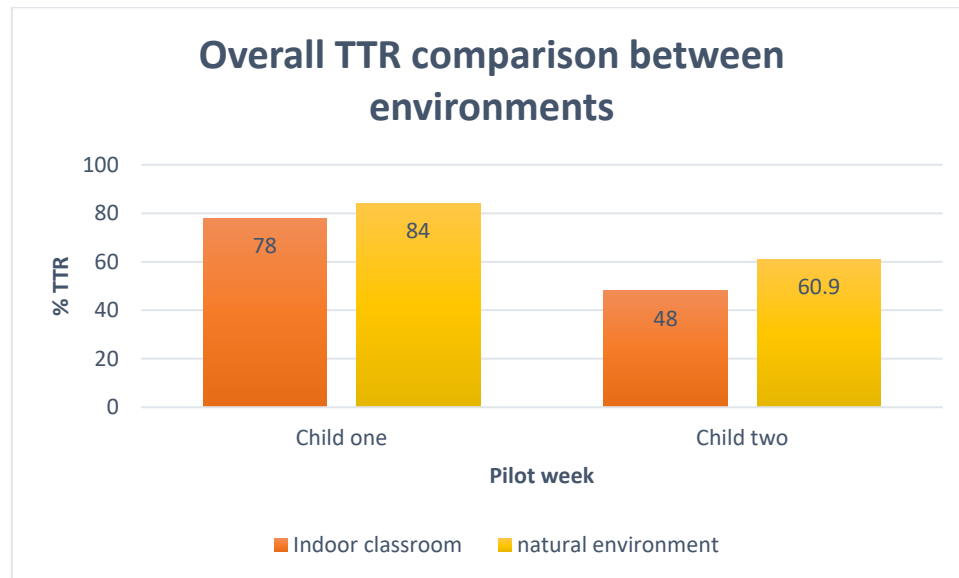


Fig. 8.1: Overall TTR for child 1 and child 2, a comparison of the indoor classroom and the natural environment.

Fig.8.1 indicates that for both children the lexical diversity was of a higher quality within the NE, with a six-percentage point differential between the environments (which equates to a 7.7% increase), and a 12.9 percentage point differential for child two (equating to a 26.9% increase in quality).

Although the other three children only captured utterances within the IC, their results are presented as follows:

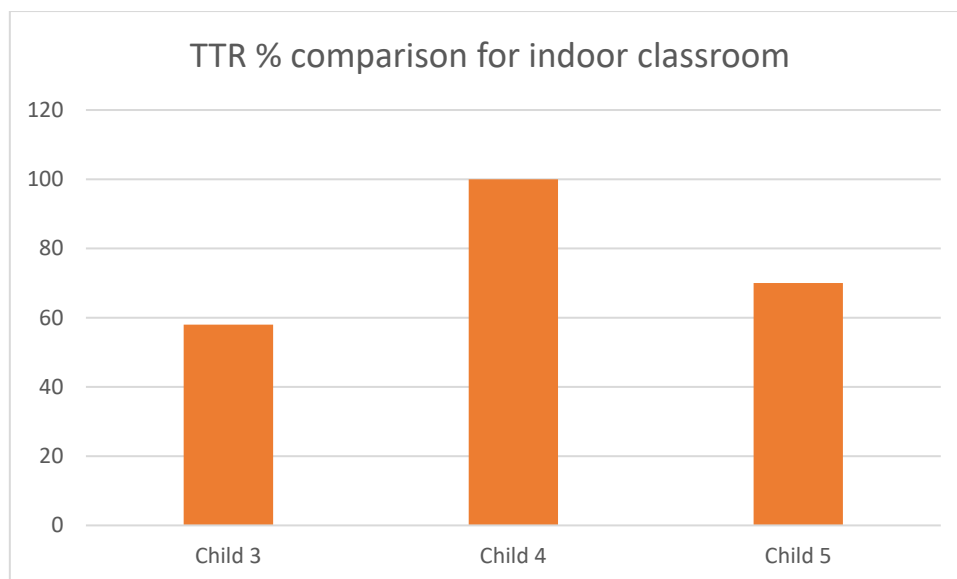


Fig.8.2: TTR % comparison for indoor classroom

Fig.8.2 shows the results of the TTR analysis (appendix 31) of child three, four and five, who recorded utterances within the IC and shows that the overall TTR percentage for the three children was recorded as 58%, 100% and 70% respectively. Although it is not possible to compare these results to other environments due to the data capturing issues, it is possible to compare to previous studies, as discussed in chapter 5 (5.6.2) that state a sample yield of 45% is the average expected return from this age group of children (Miller, 1981; Klee, 1992). When comparing the pilot results to the results of these previous studies, this indicates that these children had higher than average lexical diversity.

### **8.8: Association between TQAF and quality of children's utterances**

Although limited data was collected at this pilot stage, it was evident that it was possible to apply the TQAF alongside the results of the TTR analysis, once the study data collection was complete. For the two children who did have data from more than one environment, the statistics had an element of association; the higher quality environment resulted in higher quality SL. Obviously, it was not possible at this stage to state this association is a definite however the pilot provided sufficient

information to carry on with the study in the manner planned and to use the TQAF with its slight amendments. It was also necessary to make amendments to the data collection process for the recording of utterances and this will be discussed further in the next section.

### **8.9: Changes required to methods of data collection as a result of the pilot**

There were flaws in the data capture process which needed rectification before phase three of the study began. The cameras were too obtrusive and needed to be attached to the children in a different manner. Chest straps were therefore purchased and trialled for voice clarity. Although the recording quality was not as clear as the previous clip method, the recordings were still audible, so it was decided that this be the way forward. With the cameras being less cumbersome or obtrusive, it was anticipated that children would be less likely to be aware of the cameras and would not switch them off whilst recording was taking place. This would also facilitate naturalistic data collection.

### **8.10: Conclusion**

This phase of the research set out develop and pilot a research tool in response to phase one of the research, as presented in the previous chapter. Through analysis of phase one in line with the literature that was reviewed in chapters 2 and 3, and the pilot that has been discussed in this chapter, these elements were established and combined into a workable document which could be transferred between different learning environments; the TQAF. Chapter 3, the literature review around quality, concluded with an assertion that a HQE, to encourage children's learning and development, needed:

- Rich and engaging holistic play activities
- Space and time in which to explore
- Culturally reflective environment
- Support with risk taking

- Encouraging the child's voice

The elements within the TQAF encompassed all of these points and, along with the alterations to the data capture method for utterance analysis, phase three of the research was now possible and the findings of this final phase will be presented in the chapter that follows.

## **Chapter 9**

# **Phase three findings: The findings from the language assessment and their association with the quality of the learning environment**

### **9.1: Introduction**

The previous chapter established the elements that were required for a Transferable Quality Assessment Framework (TQAF) and presented the findings from the pilot of this framework.

The third, and final, phase of this research was to record children's speech and undertake Type/Token Ratio (TTR) analysis from four early years settings. The newly devised TQAF was then applied within these settings to establish whether there was an association between the quality of the environments and the quality of the utterances. The final phase therefore set out to answer research questions (RQ) 2, 4 and 5 (see section 1.4).

This chapter will present the findings from this final phase, and combine the findings of previous phases, with the intention of addressing all the intended study objectives (see section 1.4).

### **9.2: Findings from analysis of speech**

The results of the speech analysis are now presented, firstly on a setting by setting basis, and then with an overall comparison to provide a broad picture of the research findings in this area.

#### **9.2.1: Sample**

As planned and discussed in the methods chapter (chapter 5), four settings were selected to participate and 12 children from each setting were selected by the settings to be recorded and have their speech analysed (giving an overall sample number of 48). Although parental consent was obtained, not all children wanted to, or were able to,

participate and this resulted in the sample size being 43 children aged 3-4 years old, in total. The aim was that each setting was visited three times. Each setting's data are now presented.

### 9.2.2: Speech analysis data for setting one

Eleven children (8 boys and 3 girls), aged 3 – 4 years old, participated from setting one and the TTR results from each week are shown in table 9.1.

	Forest school Visit 1	Indoor classroom Visit 1	Wildlife garden/ natural environment Visit 2	Outdoor classroom Visit 2	Wildlife garden/ natural environment Visit 3	Outdoor classroom Visit 3	Indoor classroom Visit 3
<b>Child 1</b>	70%	52%	62%	56%			
<b>Child 2</b>	60%		44%	70%		62%	
<b>Child 3</b>		44%			62%	72%	
<b>Child 4</b>	44%		54%	72%	58%	68%	56%
<b>Child 5</b>	74%	52%					
<b>Child 6</b>	74%	74%	64%	58%	78%	76%	
<b>Child 7</b>		58%	72%				
<b>Child 8</b>	48%	64%					
<b>Child 9</b>	54%	62%	60%	61.2%	66%	76%	
<b>Child 10</b>	50%						
<b>Child 11</b>			74%				
<b>Average</b>	<b>59.3 %</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>61.4%</b>	<b>63.4 %</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>70.8 %</b>	<b>56%</b>

Table 9.1: Overall TTR statistics for children in setting one

Table 9.1 indicates that the 11 participants had a potential of seven times that their speech could be recorded over the three visits. The maximum number of recordings from any one child was six (n=3), and the minimum was one (n=2). Speech recordings were captured within the FS environment, IC, OC and the wildlife garden (NE). When analysing scorings for individual children, no obvious trends appear to be present, with a range of TTR ratings appearing within environments for all children. The average TTR scoring is shown at the bottom of the table and the lowest of these averages occurred in the IC, with TTR ratings of 58% and

56%, closely followed by the FS at 59.3%. The OC provided the highest average rating, during visit three, of 70.8%. Comparing each environment, the figure below (fig.9.1) indicates the overall average TTR per environment.

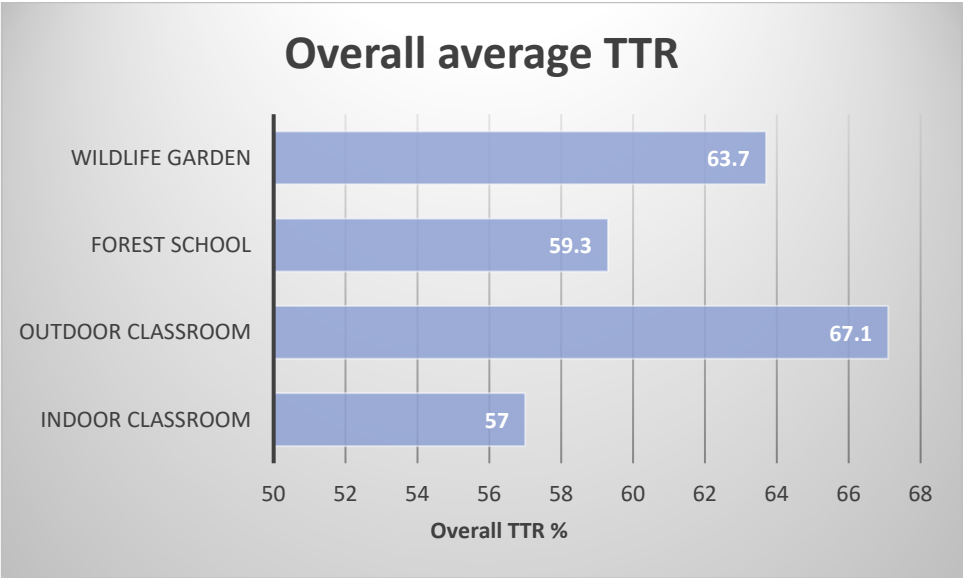


Fig. 9.1: Overall average TTR comparison for setting one

Figure 9.1 indicates that, when comparing the average TTR for each environment within setting one, the OC produced the highest speech quality, with an average rating of 67.1%. Second to this was a NE (which setting refer to as wildlife garden) with a TTR average rating of 63.7%, followed by FS at 59.3% and with the lowest TTR average score being generated from the IC (57%).

**9.2.3: Speech analysis data for setting two**

Table 9.2 shows the results from the TTR analysis from the nine participants from setting two, 5 girls and 4 boys aged 3 – 4 years old. Two recordings were analysed from the NE, two from the OC and one from the IC. The NE during visit two provided the highest speech quality, with an average TTR of 65.8% being recorded. This compares to the lowest rating, which was achieved within the OC during visit three, of 56.7%. The table indicates that the OC during visit two provided the



widest range of TTR of speech quality, with the lowest rating coming from child 4 and registering at 40%, compared to child 6 and child 2, who both scored 80% on the TTR analysis.

	Natural environment Visit 1	Indoor classroom Visit 1	Natural environment Visit 2	Outdoor classroom Visit 2	Outdoor classroom Visit 3
<b>Child 1</b>	66%	64%	68%	72%	54%
<b>Child 2</b>	54%	68%	66%	80%	
<b>Child 3</b>		68%	52%	42%	
<b>Child 4</b>	56%	66%	66%	40%	
<b>Child 5</b>		50%	78%	60%	
<b>Child 6</b>	72%		58%	80%	54%
<b>Child 7</b>	60%	72%	60%	50%	
<b>Child 8</b>		80%	78%	72%	62%
<b>Child 9</b>	44%	38%		58%	
<b>Average</b>	<b>58.7%</b>	<b>63.3%</b>	<b>65.8%</b>	<b>61.6%</b>	<b>56.7%</b>

Table 9.2: Overall TTR statistics for children in setting two

When comparing the average TTR from each environment, Figure 9.2 illustrates that the IC in this setting produced the highest quality speech, with an overall average TTR of 63.3%, compared to 62.25% from the NE and 59.15% from the OC.

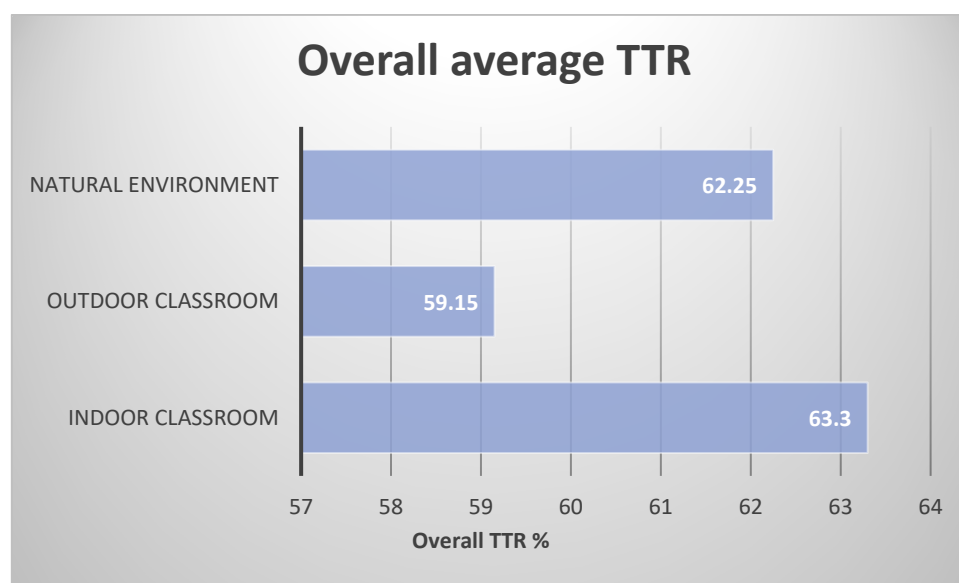


Fig. 9.2: Overall average TTR comparison for setting two

#### 9.2.4: Speech analysis data for setting three

Table 9.3 shows the TTR analysis data from setting three.

Table 9.3: Overall TTR statistics for children in setting three

	<b>Outdoor classroom Visit 1</b>	<b>Indoor classroom Visit 1</b>	<b>Outdoor classroom Visit 2</b>	<b>Indoor classroom Visit 2</b>
<b>Child 1</b>	56%	58%		
<b>Child 2</b>	44%	42%		
<b>Child 3</b>	56%	58%		
<b>Child 4</b>	58%	58%		
<b>Child 5</b>	62%	70%	72%	
<b>Child 6</b>	70%	73.5%	82%	82%
<b>Child 7</b>	58%	64%	50%	46%
<b>Child 8</b>	72%		60%	
<b>Child 9</b>	66%	58%		
<b>Child 10</b>			62%	76%
<b>Child 11</b>			66%	68%
<b>Child 12</b>			66%	68%
<b>Child 13</b>			60%	66%
<b>Child 14</b>			74%	
<b>Child 15</b>			56%	68%
<b>Average</b>	<b>60.2%</b>	<b>58.3%</b>	<b>64.8%</b>	<b>67.7%</b>

Table 9.3 shows that a total of 15 different children were included in the sample for this setting, 8 boys and 7 girls aged 3 – 4 years old. This is a higher number of children than other settings because different children asked to take part on the second visit. The setting had obtained permission from all of the parents and children who were in attendance, and children volunteered to take part and wear the cameras. Only two visits were conducted to this setting due to staff shortages within the setting causing difficulties and no access to the FS/NE. Data was therefore only captured within the IC and the OC. Table 9.3 shows that the IC on the second visit was that which produced the highest quality of speech, with an average TTR of 67.7%; conversely the IC on the first visit was that which produced the lowest TTR, of 58.3%.

Child 2 from setting three produced TTR statistics of 42% and 44% respectively however it is noted that all other children in this setting achieved TTR scores of over 50% in all environments.

Figure 9.3 shows the overall average TTR for both environments within setting three. Although the chart appears to illustrate a significant difference between the TTR in the OC and the IC, it should be noted that there is actually only 0.5% differentiation between the two environments, with the OC producing an average of 62.5% TTR, compared with the IC which resulted in a 63% average TTR.

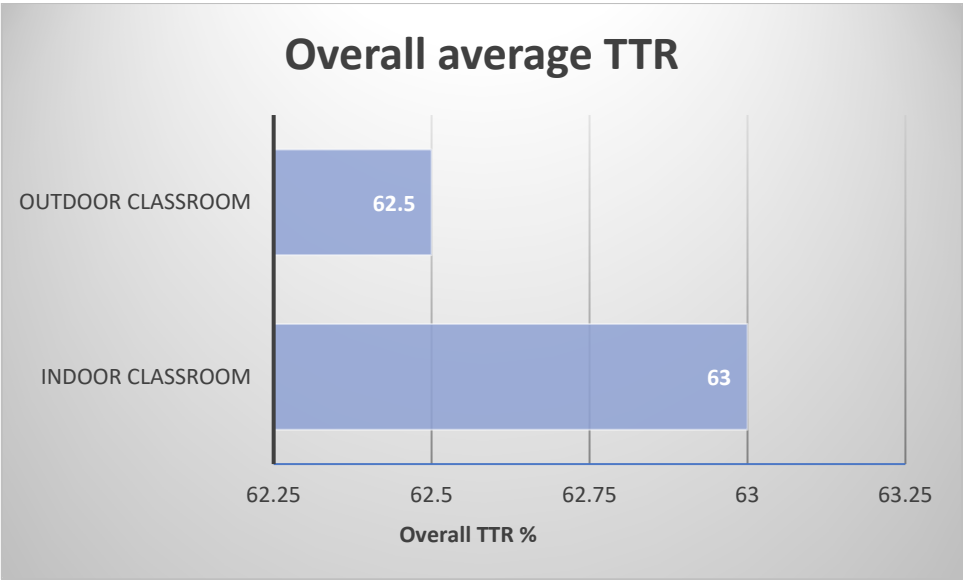


Fig. 9.3: Overall average TTR comparison for setting three

**9.2.5: Speech analysis data for setting four**

Table 9.4 shows the speech analysis results from three visits to setting four. Eight children participated from this setting (3 boys and 5 girls aged 3 – 4 years old), albeit somewhat sporadically as they were not particularly keen to join in with the research at this setting and the number of recordings reflected this, with four of the eight children only consenting to be recorded on three or less occasions, out of the six possible opportunities for recording. The result of this was that, as the table below shows, only 21 recordings (out of a potential 48) were

captured and analysed. Over the three visits, children accessed the NE on two occasions, the OC on three occasions and the IC once. This analysis provided TTR averages that ranged from 48.7% (within the OC during visit three) and 64.5% (from the OC during visit two).

	Natural environment Visit 1	Outdoor classroom Visit 1	Natural environment Visit 2	Outdoor classroom Visit 2	Outdoor classroom Visit 3	Indoor classroom Visit 3
<b>Child 1</b>	62%		64%			
<b>Child 2</b>	36%		58%			
<b>Child 3</b>	62%	40%		74%		
<b>Child 4</b>	66%	56%	66%		50%	52%
<b>Child 5</b>	68%	74%	66%	50%		
<b>Child 6</b>	30%				46%	48%
<b>Child 7</b>	60%	70%	50%	70%		62%
<b>Child 8</b>			68%	64%	50%	
<b>Average</b>	<b>54.9%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>61.6%</b>	<b>64.5%</b>	<b>48.7%</b>	<b>54%</b>

Table 9.4: Overall TTR statistics for children in setting four

Figure 9.4 indicates the overall average for each environment and shows that the NE was that which produced the highest quality of speech, with a TTR of 58.25%, compared to the OC at 57.73% and the IC at 54%.

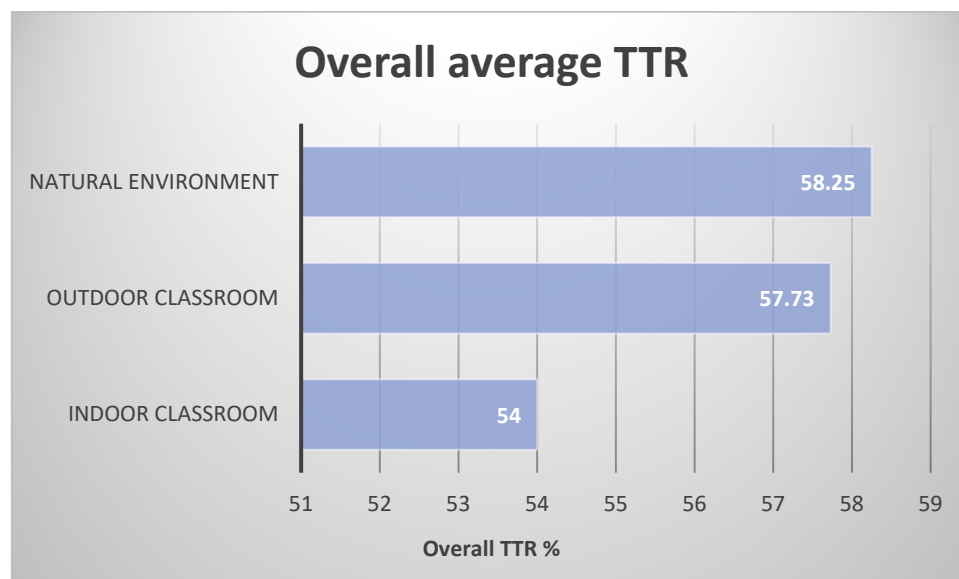


Fig. 9.4: Overall average TTR comparison for setting four

### 9.2.6: Comparison of the four settings' average TTR

When comparing all four settings' overall TTR averages, fig. 9.5 highlights that setting four had the lowest TTR in all environments. It also shows that setting two and three were very similar in results, with setting two achieving 63.3% in the IC, compared to the setting three's TTR average of 63% (only a 0.3% differential) and the OCs having a differential of 3.35% (setting two had an average TTR of 59.15% and setting three had an average TTR of 62.5%).

The TTR average from setting two within the OC was significantly higher than the other settings, with a differential of 4.6% to the next closest (setting three) and a 9.37% differential between setting two and the lowest scoring setting in this area (setting four).

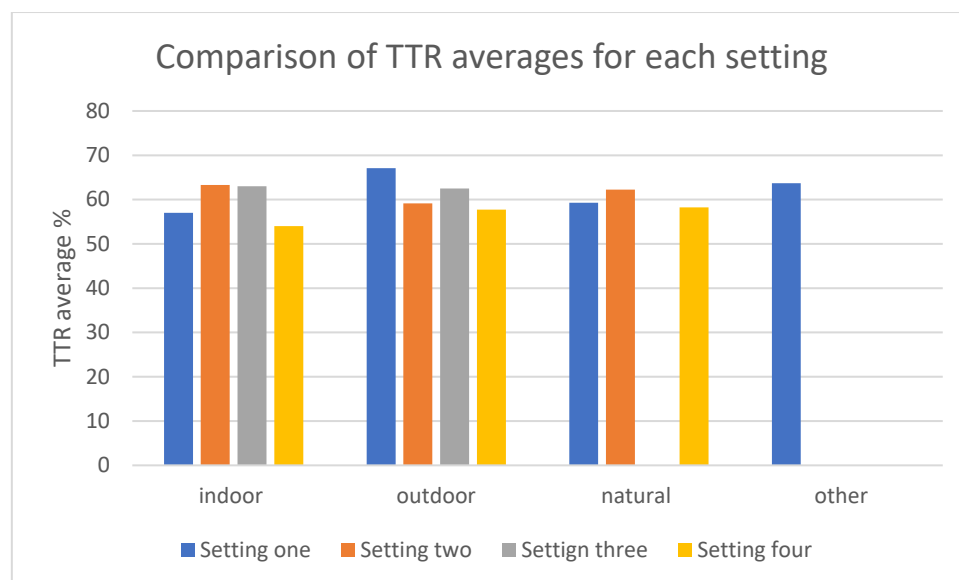


Fig. 9.5: Overall average TTR comparing four settings

If taking the above findings and combining the average TTR findings for all settings, the results appear as follows:

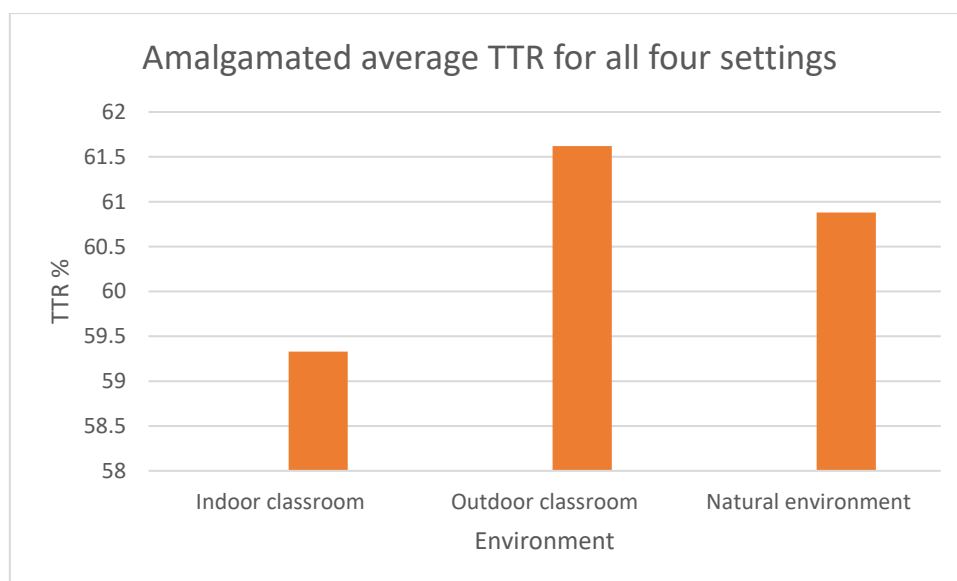


Fig. 9.6: Amalgamated average TTR for all four settings

Figure 9.6 indicates that comparisons of all four settings, amalgamating all their TTR results, reveals the OC as the environment which produces the highest quality of speech overall (with an average of 61.62%), followed by the NE which produced an overall average of 60.88% and then finally the IC producing the lowest quality of 59.33%. This indicates very little differential between each environment, with just 2.29% between the highest and lowest score.

The quality of each environment was also assessed within this phase and the findings of this will now be presented.

### 9.3: Findings from application of Transferable Quality Assessment Framework (TQAF)

Alongside the analysis of speech, the quality of the environments were analysed using the newly devised TQAF. This analysis was undertaken by myself (TR) and a research assistant (Mrs H). We both administered the TQAF separately and the scores from both were then averaged. The results of this quality rating exercise will now be presented.

### 9.3.1: TQAF data for setting one

Table 9.5 gives the results from the TQAF rating scale for setting one, as administered by myself. The data indicates that the OC was that of the highest quality, with an overall rating of 3.7 (out of a possible 4), followed by the FS (NE) which achieved an overall rating of 3.6, and then the IC which achieved a score of 3. All three themes within the IC produced a lower rating than the other two environments.

Table 9.5: TQAF results for setting one from assessment by TR

	Resources rating	Environment rating	Atmosphere rating	Overall rating
Environment one (FS)	3.6	3.55	3.8	3.6
Environment two (OC)	3.7	3.4	4	3.7
Environment three (IC)	2.9	3	3	3

Key: FS – forest school OC – outdoor classroom IC – indoor classroom

The TQAF was also administered by Mr H and the results of this are shown in table 9.6. Although the results are slightly different from those in table 9.5, the IC still produced the lowest rating, of 3.1. The FS and the OC produced the same ratings in this instance, both achieving 3.6.

Table 9.6: TQAF results for setting one from assessment by Mrs H

	Resources rating	Environment rating	Atmosphere rating	Overall rating
Environment one (FS)	3.5	3.5	3.8	3.6
Environment two (OC)	3.7	3.3	4	3.6
Environment three (IC)	3	3.1	n/a	3.1

Key: FS – forest school OC – outdoor classroom IC – indoor classroom

To give an overall rating for each environment the ratings from table 9.5 and table 9.6 were averaged and the results from this are shown in table 9.7.

Table 9.7: Average TQAF results for setting one

	Resources rating	Environment rating	Atmosphere rating	Overall rating
Environment one (FS)	3.55	3.5	3.8	3.6
Environment two (OC)	3.7	3.35	4	3.65
Environment three (IC)	2.95	3.05	3	3.05

Key: FS – forest school OC – outdoor classroom IC – indoor classroom

The data in the table above indicates that the IC, overall, was rated the lowest quality of the three environments, with a rating of 3.05, followed by the FS at 3.6 and the OC at 3.65.

### 9.3.2: TQAF data for setting two

When assessing the quality of setting two, table 9.8 shows the findings. The FS from this setting achieved the highest rating, with a score of 3.9, followed by the OC with a rating of 3.7 and the IC achieving the lowest rating of 3.4.

Table 9.8: TQAF results for setting two from assessment by TR

	Resources rating	Environment rating	Atmosphere rating	Overall rating
Environment one (FS)	4	3.7	4	3.9
Environment two (OC)	3.7	3.5	4	3.7
Environment three (IC)	3.6	3.3	3.2	3.4

Key: FS – forest school OC – outdoor classroom IC – indoor classroom

This setting requested that this analysis be undertaken by myself only. The TQAF was therefore completed alongside the deputy manager and the results in table 9.8 are the scores decided upon.

### 9.3.3: TQAF data for setting three

The TQAF was utilised within setting three in two environments only; the OC and the IC. As the setting were so short staffed on all the visits they



did not access the NE as planned. Only two environments were therefore analysed for this purpose of this study and the TQAF results are shown below. Table 9.9 shows the results from my analysis of the environments, by use of the TQAF, and indicates that both environments produced exactly the same overall rating, both achieving 3.9. The difference between the environments came within the themes; with resources scoring slightly higher within the IC (3.8 compared to 3.7 in the outdoors) and the OC scoring slightly higher in the environment theme (4 compared to 3.9 in the indoors).

Table 9.9: TQAF results for setting three from assessment by TR

	Resources rating	Environment rating	Atmosphere rating	Overall rating
Environment one (OC)	3.7	4	4	3.9
Environment two (IC)	3.8	3.9	4	3.9
Environment three	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Key: OC – outdoor classroom IC – indoor classroom

Table 9.10 shows the scoring from MRS H and indicates that the OC is of higher quality than the IC by one point (3.7 in the outdoors compared to 3.6 in the IC. Where the IC achieves lower is within the environment rating, where this scores 3.5 rather than the 3.7s that are achieved throughout the ratings elsewhere.

Table 9.10: TQAF results for setting three from assessment by Mrs H

	Resources rating	Environment rating	Atmosphere rating	Overall rating
Environment one (OC)	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7
Environment two (IC)	3.7	3.5	3.7	3.6
Environment three	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Key: OC – outdoor classroom IC – indoor classroom

When combining the quality ratings from both assessments the overall scores, as in table 9.11, were achieved. This table shows the OC to be of the highest quality (with a score of 3.85) with the IC achieving an overall score of 3.75.

Table 9.11: Average TQAF results for setting three

	Resources rating	Environment rating	Atmosphere rating	Overall rating
Environment one (OC)	3.7	3.85	3.85	3.85
Environment two (IC)	3.75	3.7	3.85	3.75
Environment three	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Key: OC – outdoor classroom IC – indoor classroom

### 9.3.4: TQAF data for setting four

The results from the TQAF analysis for setting four are shown below.  
When analysed by myself the scores shown in table 9.12 were achieved.

Table 9.12: TQAF results for setting four from assessment by TR

	Resources rating	Environment rating	Atmosphere rating	Overall rating
Environment one (FS)	3.4	3.7	3.7	3.5
Environment two (OC)	3.1	3.5	3.7	3.4
Environment three (IC)	3	3.2	3.7	3.2

Key: FS – forest school OC – outdoor classroom IC – indoor classroom

Table 9.12 shows that the IC was the lowest scoring environment and achieved an overall rating of 3.2 when scored by the TQAF. The OC scored 3.4 and the highest scoring environment was the FS which achieved an overall rating of 3.5. The IC scored lower in resources and in the environment but achieved the same rating as the other two environments when looking at the theme of the atmosphere.

The results from Mrs H are in table 9.13.

Table 9.13: TQAF results for setting four from assessment by Mrs H

	Resources rating	Environment rating	Atmosphere rating	Overall rating
Environment one (FS)	3.5	4	4	3.8
Environment two (OC)	3	3.3	3.3	3.2
Environment three (IC)	2.9	3.2	3.7	3.2

Key: FS – forest school OC – outdoor classroom IC – indoor classroom

Table 9.13 gives the highest overall rating to the FS environment, with a total score of 3.8. Both the other environments have an overall rating of 3.2 with the lowest rating coming from the resources within the IC (2.9).

On combining the two applications of the TQAF, table 9.14 shows the IC within setting four to have scored the lowest, with an overall rating of 3.2 and the highest quality environment to be the FS with an overall rating of 3.65. The lowest scoring theme was that of resources within the IC, achieving an average overall scoring of 2.95.

Table 9.14: Average TQAF results for setting four

	Resources rating	Environment rating	Atmosphere rating	Overall rating
Environment one (FS)	3.45	3.85	3.85	3.65
Environment two (OC)	3.05	3.4	3.5	3.3
Environment three (IC)	2.95	3.2	3.7	3.2

Key: FS – forest school OC – outdoor classroom IC – indoor classroom

### 9.3.5: Comparison of settings' overall TQAF ratings

The sections above have presented the findings from each setting's TQAF. These findings are now presented as a comparison in fig.9.7. This figure illustrates that setting four produced lower TQAF scores within the OC and setting one scored lowest within the IC environment and the NE. Setting three exceeded the other settings in their TQAF ratings in the environments in which they were assessed.

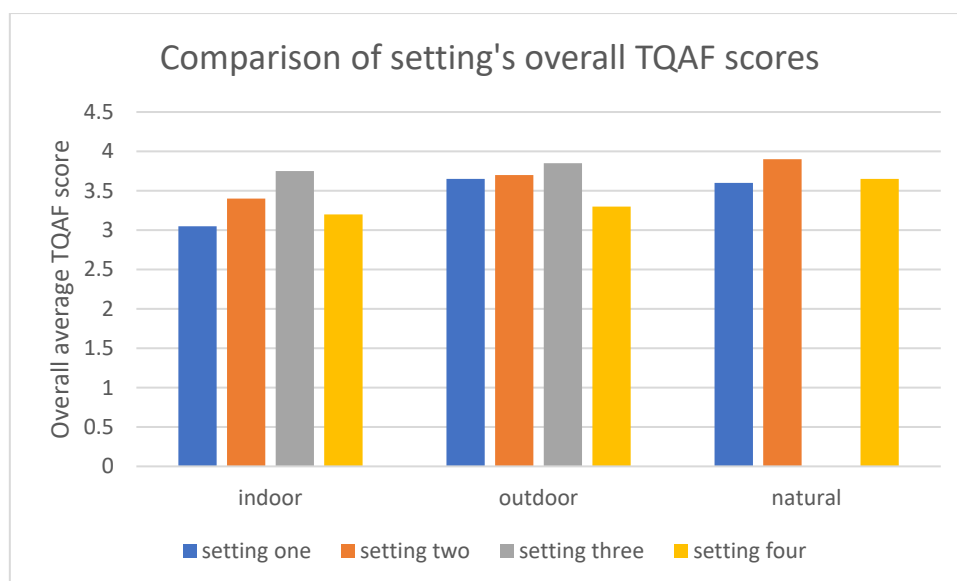


Fig. 9.7: Comparison of setting's overall TQAF scores

When comparing settings, it was also pertinent to compare the scores for each theme: resources, environment and atmosphere. The results of this are presented in appendix 32, along with details which identify any patterns in the themes scores across all settings.

#### 9.4: Comparison of average TTR and TQAF ratings

The findings from the speech analysis have been presented above (section 9.2) and the findings from the TQAF have also been presented (section 9.3). The section that now follows will present the two sets of data simultaneously to begin to address the overall aim of this study, which was to ascertain if factors in three different learning environment types for children aged 3-5 years, are associated with the quality of their utterances and if so, the nature and effects of those factors.

##### 9.4.1: Comparison of average TTR and TQAF ratings for setting one

Figure 9.8 shows comparative figures for setting one, comparing the results of the TTR speech analysis with that of the TQAF. It can be seen from the chart that there is an association in the results from both sets of data collection, with the trajectory for both sets of results presenting with a similar pattern.

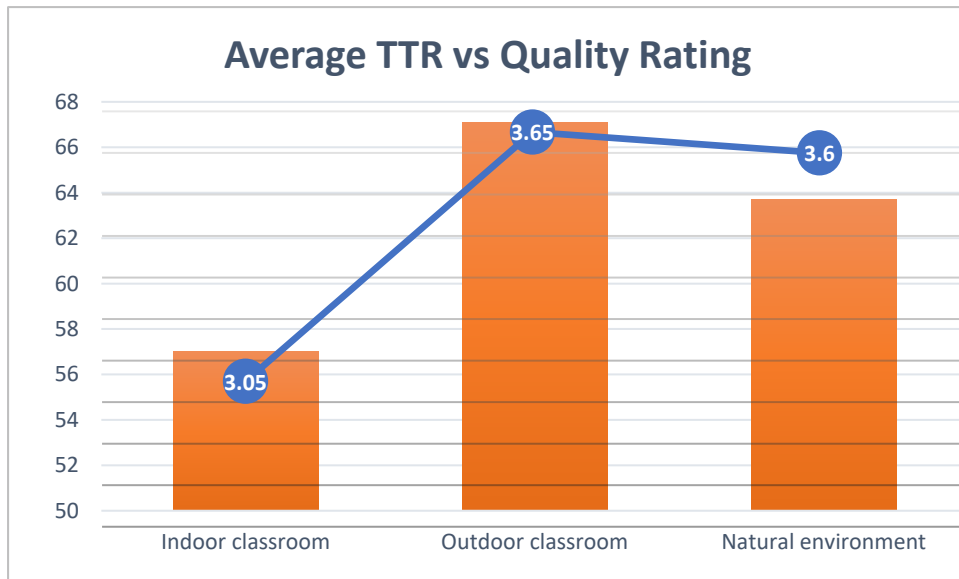


Fig. 9.8: Comparison of average TTR and TQAF ratings for setting one

#### 9.4.2: Comparison of average TTR and TQAF ratings for setting two

The comparison for setting two is shown in figure 9.9. There is no obvious pattern in the comparison of the two sets of data in this chart.

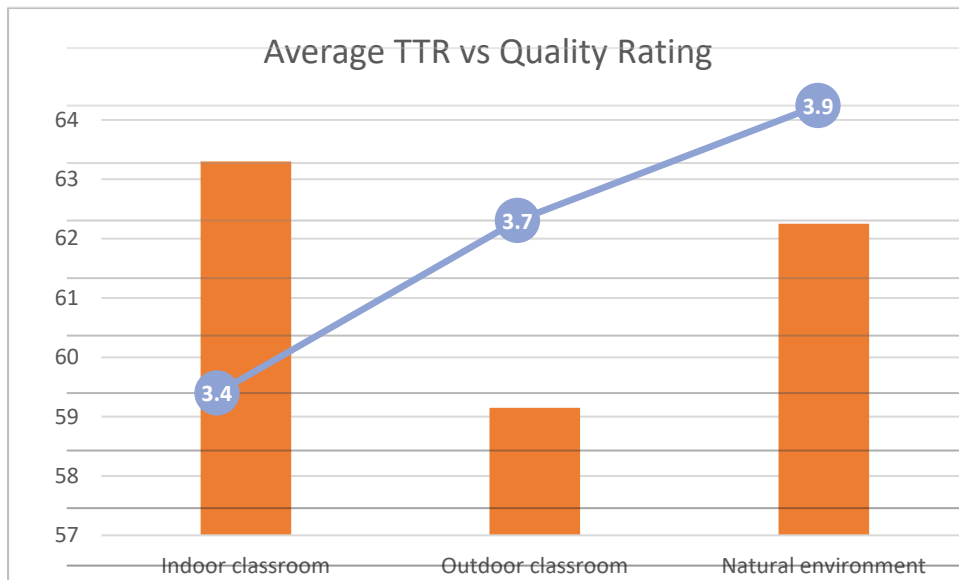


Fig. 9.9: Comparison of average TTR and TQAF ratings for setting two

### 9.4.3: Comparison of average TTR and TQAF ratings for setting three

Although fig. 9.10 indicates that there is a large differential between the two environments, this is not as large as it first appears. The difference between the two environments, as far as TTR analysis was concerned, was 0.5%, and the difference between the two environments in the TQAF scoring was 0.1 points. Both the TTR analysis and the TQAF produced very similar results in both the IC and the OC.

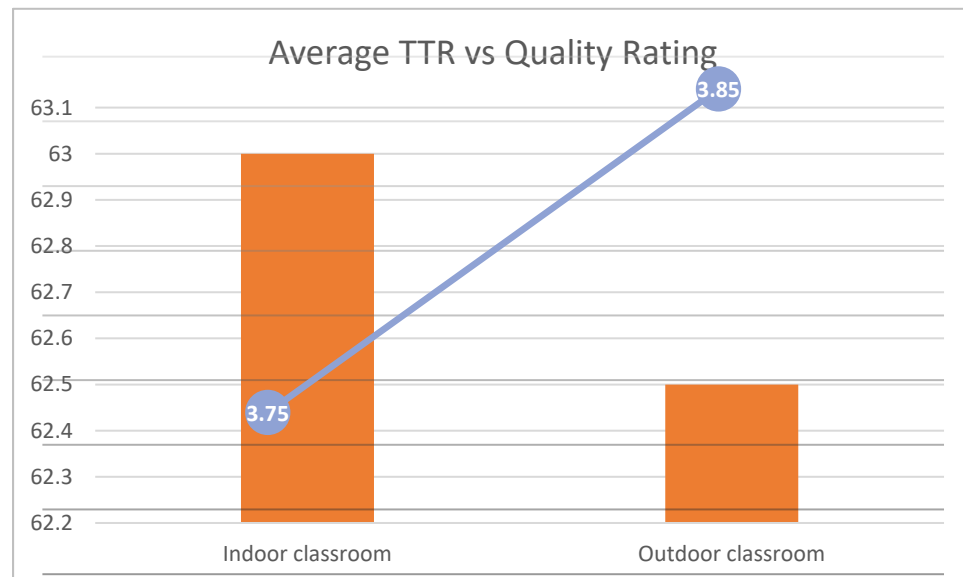


Fig. 9.10: Comparison of average TTR and TQAF ratings for setting three

### 9.4.4: Comparison of average TTR and TQAF ratings for setting four

Figure 9.11 shows an association between the TTR results and the results from the TQAF within all three environments. The trajectory of the TTR and the TQAF analysis follows a similar pattern for this setting. This is the lowest scoring setting on the TQAF rating scale and on the TTR speech analysis.

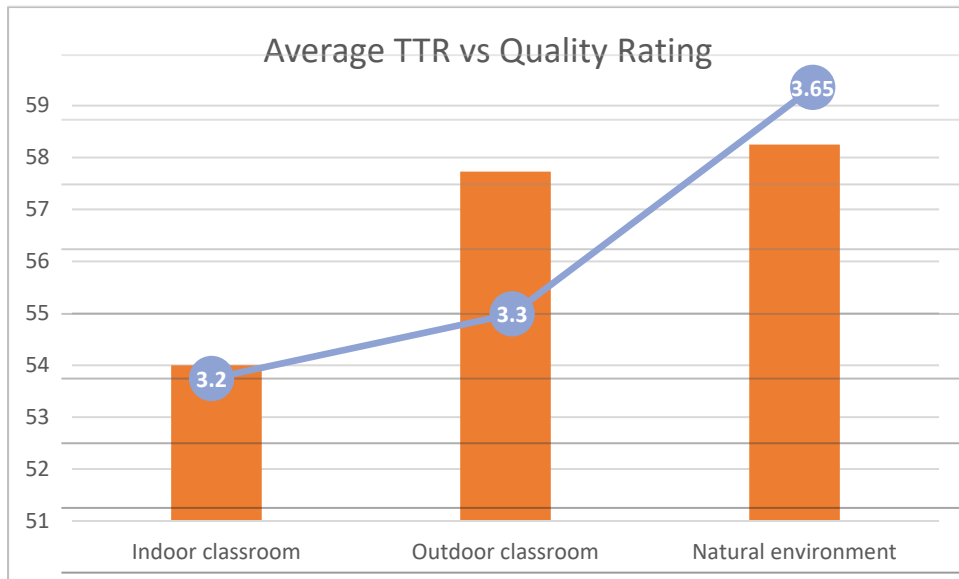


Fig. 9.11: Comparison of average TTR and TQAF ratings for setting four

### 9.5: Conclusion

This final phase of the research has analysed speech quality by TTR analysis and the quality of each environment has been assessed by application of the newly created TQAF. The results from both assessments have been presented within this chapter and the implications of these findings are now discussed critically in the chapter that follows.

# **Chapter 10**

## **Discussion**

### **10.1: Introduction**

Chapter nine presented the findings from the final phase of the research that was aiming to ascertain if factors in three different learning environment types for children aged 3-5 years are associated with the quality of their utterances and if so, the nature and effects of those factors. Objectives one and three have been discussed in chapter eight. This chapter discusses critically these findings, with links made to extant literature. This process aligns with objectives two, four and five of the present study.

### **10.2: The impact of the environment on the quality of young children's utterances**

In response to RQ2, the findings presented in the previous chapter indicate that the quality of the environment appears to have an impact on the quality of young children's utterances. Figures presented in section 9.4 suggest that in three of the four settings there is an association between the quality of the environments (as rated by the TQAF) and the quality of the utterances in the study settings (as analysed by TTR). The results indicate that in the study settings the higher the quality of the environment then the higher the quality of the speech. It is therefore argued that the quality of the environment does impact on the quality of SL in the study settings.

There was however one exception; setting two. Setting two did not follow the same trajectory as the other sample settings and the speech results were of higher quality within the environment that scored the lowest on the TQAF; the IC. The main difference noted (shown in appendix 32- (comparison of elements)) was that setting two was the only one that did not operate their indoor/outdoor environments on a free-flow basis.



Children could not choose which environment that they played in within this setting, instead having to go as a group to the environments as a planned activity. This finding suggests that for children to benefit from environments fully, and to be able to fully immerse themselves into an environment, they should have free choice to access environments that suit their individual needs where possible. This finding aligns with Waite and Pratt's (2013) view that 'particular spaces are suitable for different kinds of learning because of the functions and activities that they support' (Waite and Pratt, 2013:3) however it is asserted that not only does an environment support an activity, but it also supports an individual and therefore children should be given access to environments that support them best. Gosling (2016) believes that an environment should be interesting to children to engage them in their play and subsequently encourage language. This leads the assertion that children should be able to freely engage wherever that suits their learning and interests. This finding also suggests that playing and learning within an environment will only enhance SL fully if the environment is that which the child is best suited to. Children should therefore be able to choose the environment in which they spend their time.

In the study settings the quality of speech was also higher in OCs and NEs, than it was in the ICs, again in all settings apart from setting two. As discussed in chapter five, TTR analysis analyses the quality of speech based on the amount of words spoken and how many of those words are different from each other. Repetition lowers the TTR score (Richards, 1987). It may be, therefore, that the TTR was lower within the indoor environments due to the noise levels within the ICs. This is discussed further in section 10.3.1v below. Nevertheless, OCs and NEs resulted in higher quality speech in the study settings.

These findings align with Bruner's belief (1983), which is that a child's repertoire of vocabulary is greater when they are exposed to richer and more varied vocabulary within different environments. These HQEs are

those which promote this varied vocabulary and therefore lead to enhanced quality of utterances according to the study data. Myers (2005) alleges that a HQE is particularly instrumental in improving children's language outcomes and based on these study findings it is argued that this is likely to be the case for these study settings. On the contrary however, it could be suggested that it is not just the environment that is instrumental within this area; there are other variables, such as family life (Gilkerson *et al.*, 2018), socio-economic status (Hart and Risely, 1995) and genetics (Chomsky, 1957), that could also impact on the children's SLD. Taking all of this into account, the claim is made that the quality of the environment *did* impact on the quality of young children's speech in the study settings. The findings presented in the previous chapter are for groups of children and therefore the quality of speech is presented for each cohort rather than for individual children. Therefore, this overrides individual differences that may be present and as such it can be stated that the association in the study settings was the result of the quality of the environment.

In addition to the points above, there are other specific factors within the environments that have been identified as pivotal to the quality of SL and these will be discussed in the section that now follows.

### **10.3: Did the quality of young children's utterances differ according to specific factors in the environments and what were those specific factors?**

It was found, and documented within the previous chapter, that the quality of speech did differ in different environments. When comparing aggregate TTR averages across all settings' environments (fig.9.6) it was found that speech quality was lowest in the ICs and highest in the OCs, with NEs falling between the two. Although there was not much difference between the average TTR for each environment (59.33% for ICs, 60.88% for NEs and 61.62% for OCs), a difference exists and this difference warrants exploration.

Analysis revealed a total of 27 different elements that were included within the TQAF (appendix 29) and these elements were therefore classed as the features required for a HQE with regards to children's SLD. When analysing these features (appendix 32) alongside the TTR analysis, there were some elements that appeared to impact, both in positive and negative ways, on the quality of utterances within different environments. These factors are now discussed further.

### **10.3.1: Factors in the indoor classroom**

As noted, the IC was the environment that, overall, produced the lowest quality speech. When comparing the features and the TQAF results (appendix 32) across the sample settings, the indoor environments did not score highly within the areas of mark making (element 1.2) and promoting physical activity (element 1.4). These were the lower ranking elements of quality within the settings when looking at the resources theme (with the exception of mark making within setting two). Additionally, element 2.7 (adequate risks/boundaries), element 2.8 (uncluttered/appropriate amounts) and element 3.1 (acoustics) and 3.3 (time) were noticeably lower scoring within the IC, compared to other environments.

These factors are now discussed in further detail.

#### **10.3.1i: Mark making**

Within the ICs, access to mark making materials was not ranked as highly as within other environments (appendix 32). Mark making is the one area to which extant literature did not refer directly regarding its necessity to promote SL (see 8.4.1ii), and although it is recognised that there is a need for creativity within an environment (DfE, 2017), it could be asserted that mark making is not necessarily the element that is needed to drive this creativity. It may be that this was an aspect that was produced by

responses throughout the interviews as this may have been deemed important by practitioner, parents and “experts” when considering the concept of school-readiness. McDowall Clark (2017) reported that there was a recognition that school readiness includes the preparation for formal learning and this may be associated within this finding. Beyond the concept of school-readiness though, it is suggested that children need access to mark making materials and the space in which to use those materials as this is an opportunity to sit together, talk through their thoughts and engage with others. It is likely that lack of access to mark making is a factor which impedes children’s speech and it is therefore argued that, in line with respondent’s views in this study, this is an element that should be present in any assessment of a HQE.

### **10.3.1ii: Promoting physical activity**

Regarding element 1.4, promoting physical activity, this was also an area that was not high scoring throughout any of the settings’ ICs. That said, all settings scored higher in this aspect in their other environments, so it could therefore be argued that if the children have the opportunity for physical play and learning, then they are not disadvantaged. It is widely documented that there is a need for children to move to enhance their language (McGilchrist, 2009; Piaget and Inhelder, 1969; Bedford *et al.*, 2015) however it is asserted that this is not necessarily the case for every environment in which they are playing or learning. A balance of activities should be provided and that environments should be designed to reflect this balance, as asserted by respondents. It would be an area of concern should children not have access to alternative environments. It is an aspect that, I would suggest, would need attention if the ability for children to be physical, ‘to use gross motor skills and exert themselves physically’ (excerpt from glossary of TQAF – appendix 29), were not available at all.

### **10.3.1iii: Adequate risks/boundaries**

Leading on from the need for children to be able to exert themselves physically, is the need for children to be able to take adequate risks and

the indoor environments, across the four settings, did not tend to provide this opportunity to its maximum benefit (appendix 32). When looking at the restrictions of space, it could be argued that an indoor environment is not conducive to providing the opportunities for risk. Stephenson defines risky play as 'attempting something never done before, feeling on the borderline of "out of control" often because of height and speed, and overcoming fear' (Stephenson, 2003:36) and considering this definition it could be stated that an indoor environment is not likely to be able to achieve this. That said, risk does not necessarily have to present itself in the form of physical risk and, if an IC was to enhance this area, then it could be that alternative risks are sought; wood working tools, twirling around with arms outstretched, overcoming fears and phobias. If the environment dictates it, then it is suggested that there could be alternative ways of addressing risky play and these should be encouraged due to their obvious need, according to participants. when considering SLD.

#### **10.3.1iv: Uncluttered/appropriate amounts**

Contrary to McCartney's belief (1984) the amount of equipment and resources are not influential in a child's speech development, the element that assessed the clutter within the environment was an area that was low scoring when looking at ICs and it is therefore asserted that this is in fact influential in children's language quality. It is suggested that a chaotic environment which is potentially overloaded with resources, can have an adverse impact on a child's speech. Section 8.4.2viii describes this concept as children 'not being able to see the wood for the trees', and it is purported as a result of this study that children need space and well-ordered environments so that they are able to process their thoughts, which in turn leads to language enhancement (Richardson, 2019a).

#### **10.3.1v: Acoustics**

Appendix 32 indicates that the ICs were the only environments which did not score maximum possible marks on the TQAF when rating the acoustics. It is argued that this is likely to be due to the fact that the

indoor environments are louder (Marshall and Lewis, 2014; Evans, 2006) and children are therefore not heard the first time and struggle to gain attention from their peers due to the restricting acoustics. They therefore repeat frequently, reducing their TTR score. It could be argued that this creates persistent communicators which, in turn, enhances speech. Conversely it could cause frustration and create apathy, preventing speech. That said, at the point of research this was shown to be having an impact on the quality of utterances and was therefore worthy of note. Another facet to this could be that noise is known to generate stress, which in turn increases cortisol levels and prevents children learning (Shanker, 2012; Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). It maybe that children are generally more likely to be stressed within an indoor environment, in turn impacting on their levels of speech. This is something that could warrant further investigation in the future.

### **10.3.1vi: Time**

The final element which appears to have had an adverse effect on children's utterances within the IC is that of time (appendix 32). There has been previous acknowledgement of the need for children to 'wallow' in their play (Bruce, 2011:24; Richardson and Murray, 2016) and that appears not be happening so much within the indoor environment. It is argued that this is likely to be because the indoors is so much more driven by routines and schedules, compared to the outdoor and NEs. This was alluded to within phase one of the research with one participant stating:

*...[in the indoors] that at 9.30 it's group time and that's when you can talk.....[in forest school] we don't tell them that that they have to tidy up 24/7 (E1\_182-186).*

The results from this study suggest therefore that the restriction that routines provide within the IC could impact on children's ability to 'wallow' in their speech as well as within their play.

The points discussed above are those elements that appeared to impact negatively on the quality of speech in the indoor environment. There

were however aspects within the ICs that had a positive effect on the quality of the speech and these will now be discussed.

### **10.3.1vii: Provocations**

The findings from this study indicate that the need exists, within the indoor environment, for provocations which promote the 'unexpected' (Strong-Wilson and Ellis (2007:42). This assertion is reflected in element 1.1 (provocations) which scored higher overall, across the settings, within the indoor environments. It is argued that this 'unexpected' is the driving force for awe and wonder in young children and therefore prompts enthusiasm and enhances the spoken word. These objects not only prompt interest but, it is suggested, enhance lexical richness (Jarvis, 2013) both within the setting and when children expand on their experiences within the home environment. Provocations can exist within any environment, however throughout this study, they were more prominent within the indoor environments, in the study settings. This may be because this is where a conscious effort needs to be made for these provocations to exist, with the belief that they will be naturally occurring within the outdoors, and this conscious effort resulted in higher quality aspects within these study settings.

### **10.3.1viii: Books**

In addition to the provision of provocations, the study settings also used their ICs well as far as access to books were concerned (element 1.11). This element did not fare as well within the OC and the NE. Settings obviously recognise the need for access to a range of books and it could be asserted that they do so to promote interactions (Doyle and Bramwell, 2006; Krishnan and Johnson, 2014). Sutterby and Frost (2006) report that play in outside environments is less likely to be influenced by adults, therefore it may be that books are viewed more as an activity to engage adults and children in interactions and therefore encouraged more within

the indoor environments. This concept of adult engagement is discussed further in section 10.3.2viii below.

The factors of the NE that are deemed to require discussion, as a result of the findings of this study, will now be explored.

### **10.3.2: Factors in the natural environment**

As mentioned previously the NEs across all three settings that accessed such environments (setting three did not access their NE at all) produced the second highest quality of speech overall. These NEs were all slightly different. One was a manufactured FS site, some were in a public wooded area and one was a wildlife garden (see field notes – appendices 15, 16, 17 & 18). This variety shows that, as Waite *et al.* (2016) assert, the concept that a setting adopts will reflect the cultural and pedagogical landscape and comparing one approach to another could be likened to ‘comparing apples and pears’ (Waite *et al.*, 2016:884). Although this comparison carries a warning, in this instance it is suggested that a comparison can, and should, be made. All environments were natural by definition, by which they were all naturally occurring, using natural resources and that which fostered a relationship with the natural world (Wellings, 2012). It is therefore deemed appropriate that a comparison of features, and a discussion around which aspects impact on speech quality, can be undertaken.

When comparing the features and related scores on the TQAFs for each NE, there are certain elements that stood out as being particularly beneficial for young children’s speech in comparison to other environments in the study settings. These will be discussed in detail in the section that follows.

#### **10.3.2i: Promoting physical activity**

Perhaps unsurprisingly the NEs were the most conducive to promoting physical activity, in contrast to the indoor environments, as discussed in



section 10.3.1ii. Tandon *et al.* (2018) found that children were twice as physically active and less sedentary when playing outdoors rather than indoors. Tandon *et al.* (2018) do not define outdoor play in detail but report that larger indoor areas did not generate the same effects on increased physical activity as the outdoor spaces did. It is likely that the features of a NE instinctively encourage physical play (BERA/TACTYC, 2014; Fjortoft, 2004). The NEs are, by their very nature, equipped with the space and the natural resources which promote physical activity. If, as has been argued earlier, children being more physical promotes more language then the NE is ideally suited to enhance this, and this claim aligns with the results from the TQAF.

### **10.3.2ii: Transportable resources/loose parts**

Within the NEs in the study settings one element that was shown to be of a higher quality, and therefore greater prominence, than in other environments (according to TQAF findings), was 'transportable resources/loose parts'. This finding suggests that this element impacted on the quality of speech for young children in the study settings. As mentioned in section 8.4.1viii, this enforces the need for open ended play resources to promote imagination and exploration (Whitebread *et al.*, 2015). It is suggested that this is likely to be more prominent within the NE as these NEs are not generally connected to any other environment, compared to the indoor and OCs which in three out of the four settings were directly linked to each other. Also, within the NE these resources are generally naturally occurring (Wellings, 2012) and therefore *looser* in essence. Within the ICs and OCs, more of a concerted effort may be required to place loose parts into the environment. The findings from this study identify that whether these loose parts have occurred naturally or through conscious thought, they remained equally important when promoting SL in the study settings.

### **10.3.2iii: Quiet areas**

It has been acknowledged previously that children require quiet areas in which to process thought and engage in meaningful dialogue (Macoby,

2007; Whitebread *et al.*, 2015) and the findings from the present study indicated that the NE was more likely to provide this opportunity. The provision of space (element 2.5) was also noted to be of significantly higher quality within the NE compared to the other environments and it may therefore be the way that this space is utilised that can impact on the provision of the quiet areas in the study settings. All three NEs that were assessed had purposely provided this quiet area, by constructing dens, mazes and seating areas tucked away (see field notes - appendices 15, 16, 17 & 18). The findings indicate that this was a contributory factor to the quality of children's utterances and was therefore an element that required attention from practitioners, in these settings.

#### **10.3.2iv: Prompts imagination**

A NE has been shown, in this study, to have potential to prompt imagination and it is suggested that points 10.3.2vii which discuss the variety of resources and 10.3.2ii; transportable resources/loose parts have a positive effect on children's SL in this way. The findings from this study suggest that children's imaginations are fostered within the NE as they do not have the variety of resources available to them and those resources that are available are open ended so have no fixed purpose. This creates imaginary play and encourages children to express themselves more, hence expanding vocabulary and lexical richness (Knight, 2011; Sutterby and Frost, 2006). It was mooted within chapter 8 that the likelihood was that this would be seen more within the OC and the NE and the evidence suggests that this was indeed the case, however the NE outperformed the OC in this area. These results align with the responses from the children in phase one (see 7.3.3). When they were asked what constituted a high-quality NE, their responses included imaginary aspects, and this suggests their awareness of this kind of play being produced in the NE. It has been highlighted through the findings of this study that this element is contributory to a HQE for SL in the study settings.

### **10.3.2v: Natural resources/wildlife**

Perhaps unsurprisingly the element of natural resources/wildlife was rated the highest within the NE and this contributed to the positive impact on children's utterances. This point aligns with the opinion of Levey (2011) concerning children's language development, who states that it is essential that the language used should reflect the environment and the resources and wildlife within this natural space should be present to encourage this. Transcriptions from phase three of the study indicate how these natural resources influenced children's utterances, for example:

*I've opened a big bit of rock. No. Yes it's rock. I can point out any piece of rock I can. I opened a big piece of rock. You're right it's not, it's just a piece of, I'm trying to get a big bit of earth. I found a stone. [S1V2C4\_31-33]*

*Shall we go down this way? Shall we go down this...Oh! No. That's not fair! C (name)! And that's the water! Come on. One more day. Does that tree have flowers? But apples have to grow this big. We have to wait til. We have to grow. They have to .... [S2V2C2\_25-27]*

These excerpts indicate that the range and type of vocabulary used reflects the environment in which the children are playing in. The language in the samples above was not heard within an indoor environment as this would not reflect the environment or the resources available. This indicates the importance of children accessing different environments and different resources and experiences within such environments.

### **10.3.2vi: How does the environment feel?**

The NE was found to be the highest scoring, when compared to the others (fig. 9, appendix 32), as to how it made the assessment team feel. These environments provided an experience for children that meant that they were happy, calm and engaged in their play. Although this element of the TQAF was worded in a way to aid objectivity, it could be argued that this

remains an element that is very much open to individual interpretation (Canning, 2012). It may be that as I had previous experiences with FSs, and the research assistant also was an advocate of NEs this element could have been scored with an aspect of bias. This may align with the thoughts of Passy and Waite (2013:173) who state that research into NEs is normally undertaken by 'enthusiasts' and as a result this raises issues around subjectivity. That said, it is purported that the feeling of an environment is of equal importance to the overall quality as are the physical elements and the wording of the TQAF was such that it aimed to steer assessors away from their personal opinions and it was more observational in context. It is widely documented that children need to feel content and secure in their surroundings to learn effectively (Neaum, 2012) and the general feeling that this environment promotes is therefore a crucial aspect of this. Although other environments provided this it was noted to be more prevalent within the NE in the study settings.

In addition to the points discussed above, there were also elements within the NEs that were highlighted as potentially requiring enhancement. These factors therefore could be regarded as impacting less positively on speech development in the study settings and will be discussed further.

### **10.3.2vii: Variety of resources**

Although it could be argued that this element could be beyond the control of the practitioner if following the true concept of FSs (Wellings, 2012), the variety of resources was of a lesser quality within these NEs, and it could be argued that this therefore impacts on the quality of children's utterances (Kadis, 2007). That said, although the true essence of a FS is that resources should be naturally occurring (Wellings, 2012) practitioners should be encouraged to consider the variety of resources and experiences available to children. As three out of the four NEs were those that were constructed by the settings it should be an aspect that could be enhanced by introduction of different resources. What is crucial, from a SL perspective, is that resources need to encourage children's learning and prompt engagement (Christie and Roskos, 2006). It is argued

therefore that variety is required within the NE and that some manufacturing of this environment may be necessary, to ensure that children's needs continue to be met over time and they maintain levels of engagement week after week in the study settings.

### **10.3.2viii: Supportive environment/space for role modelling**

This element was weakest within the NEs in the study settings. It is asserted that this is because within the IC and the OC the adults were more available and engaged with the children's play and learning (see field notes – appendices 15, 16, 17 & 18). Within the NE children were more likely to use the space and play independently from the adults. This study's interactionist approach (Tomasello, 2003), recognises the need for interactions with both the environment and with others to assist children's language production. Although the study focused on the interactions with the environment interaction with the environment does not seem, in itself, to be sufficient without the support and encouragement from a practitioner. This element indicated the importance of these interactions.

### **10.3.2ix: Access between indoors/outdoors**

As mentioned previously, three out of the four NEs were separate from the other environments and children were not able to flow freely between environments as they wished. This therefore impacted upon the TQAF ratings and it could therefore be argued that this impacts on the quality of speech. This has been discussed further in section 10.2 above.

### **10.3.3: Factors in the outdoor classroom**

The outdoor environment was that which produced the highest TTR across all four settings and it is necessary therefore to consider what aspects within these environments were contributory to this result. Encouraging development was the only element however that scored maximum points, where other environments did not.

### **10.3.3i: Encourage development**

It is interesting to note that the OCs within all settings were constructed with a view to encouraging development and scored the maximum in this area within their TQAF assessments (appendix 32). The need for environments to encourage development is the aspect of the TQAF that reflects the statutory guidelines within England (DfE, 2017). As all the participant settings were rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by the inspectorate (Ofsted, 2018b), it may be expected that this element would be high scoring. It could be asserted that this element does not need explicit coverage within the TQAF as it should automatically be occurring irrespectively in settings in England, however this does not always appear to be the case outside of the IC (Olsen, 2013). Therefore, including this element is crucial to the promotion of SL in the study settings and arguably beyond in England.

### **10.3.3ii: Singing area**

The singing, or music making area, (element 2.4) did not score very highly in any environment, however the TQAF results showed that this aspect was of higher quality within the OC. Although it has been recognised that there is a need for exposure to, and participation in, music making and singing to enhance language skills (Hallam, 2017; Sylva *et al.*, 2004), it should be noted that on no occasion throughout the data collection were children observed engaging in the singing areas of the settings. This indicates that although the literature review and the responses from phase one showed this to be a necessary element perhaps it is not as essential as they indicate. It could be argued that if children are not accessing the area, then, by default, this makes it non-essential. It should be noted however, that just because it was not used whilst the observations were undertaken it is not necessarily an area that is never used. It may also be that children view this activity as an adult led activity and therefore do not access these areas when engaged in free

play activities in the study settings. This may be worthy of further study at a later date.

Areas that were highlighted as needing improvement throughout the OCs were elements 1.11 (books) and 1.1 (provocations). Although it could be argued that these have not impacted upon the quality of speech due to this environment being that which obtained the highest TTR ratings, equally it is also acknowledged that these TTR ratings could have been enhanced even further if they too had been of highest quality. Notably both of these elements are those which the ICs scored highly in, and have therefore been discussed in detail earlier in this chapter. It may be that practitioners are viewing their whole setting as one environment, and not necessarily considering each different environment in isolation. In this vein OCs were often a replication of the IC (see field notes – appendices 15, 16, 17 & 18). This was especially the case for setting three. This setting was managed by a team who took part in the stakeholders' interviews within phase one, and both categorically stated that there should be no difference between the two environments, with one participant stating:

*There's no difference. There shouldn't be a defined area it should just be one continuum where, where it flows basically. In my view, that's my vision. (PA3S3\_32-33)*

Findings subsequently showed that setting three, when analysed using the TQAF, and when comparing the TTR results, performed almost identically within the IC and the OC. This indicates that their views on this continuous provision were represented in reality and one environment seamlessly supported the other. It could therefore be argued that in this instance the TQAF be administered for the environment as one, rather than two separate entities, however for the purpose of this research the segregation was required. This is something to be considered further though should this research be undertaken again or should the TQAF be applied again in the study settings or elsewhere.

#### **10.3.4: Conclusion to factors discussion**

Enhancing areas within certain environments may benefit children's SL, when considering the findings from this study. There are limitations to the 'perfect' environment and individual settings should therefore enhance areas where they can to compensate for those areas which are not so favourable, in line with the TQAF. Examples that support these claims are the provocations and the provision of books within an indoor environment, as has been discussed earlier in this chapter. The discussions above highlighted that the indoor environments can do these aspects particularly well and it is purported that this is a way the space restrictions can be overcome, and other elements can be used to an advantage.

Goodrich (2010:331) suggests that 'we do, therefore we think' and therefore giving children more to 'do' by way of provocations and access to books, is a crucial feature of a HQE. If, as Goodrich suggests, children doing leads to children thinking, it could be further suggested that the more children do the more they think. Taking this one step further, it is asserted that if children think more, then this could result in them talking more (Richardson, 2019a). It is therefore argued that this should read "we do, therefore we think, therefore we talk". This links to the notion of the need for development to be regarded holistically (Richardson, 2019a) and therefore reflects the need for the environment to be a vehicle to encourage this holistic development.

#### **10.4: What constitutes a high-quality learning environment for young children's speech and language development?**

The TQAF was constructed using views and opinions on what constitutes a high-quality learning environment for young children's SLD, and the 'intricate web of interconnected beliefs and experiences' (Gosling, 2016:31) have been compiled accordingly. The components that make up the TQAF, and are discussed in detail within chapter 8, are therefore the defining features that the evidence suggested were necessary to facilitate



this. Katz (1994:206) argues that 'any kind of assessment requires the selection of criteria and the adoption of standards, a standard being a particular level of quality with relation to a criterion.' Although the TQAF has established clearly the criteria for assessment, and has given clear definitions regarding particular levels of quality, it was found that this still was subjective in its application (see section 11.2.4 for further details). However, it is also recognised that it is impossible to assess quality in a way that does not take personal views and opinions into account (Pence and Moss, 1994) and this TQAF is therefore a reliable form of assessment when looking at the quality of the play and learning environment as it has been formed by a wide range of views and opinions.

Although some specific factors have been discussed in detail earlier in this chapter, the twenty-seven elements that are within the TQAF (appendix 29) are regarded as what is needed to provide a HQE to assist young children's SLD. Although Rentzou (2017) alleges that these process quality factors are generally harder to regulate, it has been found that the application of this framework is an appropriate rating scale and is a manageable and appropriate analytical tool. Mathers *et al.* (2012) states that this kind of rating scale is the most appropriate manner of measuring process quality. Phillipsen *et al.* (1997) assert that process quality cannot be assessed in isolation and that elements of structural quality need to be analysed alongside the process elements. It is argued that the process of Ofsted inspections (2018a) are that which focus on the structural quality, such as adult-child ratio, staff qualifications and group sizes (Munton *et al.*, 1995) and as all of the participant settings had been through an inspection process and had been rated 'good' or 'outstanding' (Ofsted, 2018b) then this was actually looking at the quality from both perspectives. The TQAF therefore is designed to focus on process quality factors, arguably the factors that practitioners and settings have more control over.

The TQAF was designed taking all stakeholders opinions into account. However, responses from the “experts” all took a different theoretical stance in the ways that they viewed quality with regards to SLD (see footnotes on transcripts for further details – appendix 7). This, again, indicates the subjective nature of this process and emphasises the concept that HQEs are indeed ‘in the eye of the beholder’ (Pence and Moss, 1994:172). It is argued that this adds an extra richness to the data as it looks at the concept of quality through different lenses and uses the TQAF to conjoin these beliefs into one comprehensible and applicable assessment framework.

When considering what makes a HQE, it is worth considering what has not been included as necessary factors. There was no mention of information communication technology (ICT) within the TQAF and ICT was therefore not a feature deemed to be necessary within a play and learning environment when considering SL according to the participants in this study. This aligns with the literature discussed in chapter two that considered that the use of ICT, particularly without adult interaction, was felt to be detrimental to young children’s SLD (Kuhl *et al.*, 2003; Courage and Howe, 2010).

A final point to note is that the results of settings one and three were not the lowest of the study settings as far as TTR scores were concerned. Those settings are those based in areas of lower socio-economic class (NRS, 2014) and these results therefore contradicted literature which states that children in poverty fair worse than their peers (Finnegan and Warren, 2015; Hart and Risley, 1995; Gross, 2012). High quality early years provision can benefit children from all socio-economic backgrounds (Myers, 2005; Feinberg *et al.*, 2001) and it may therefore be that the high-quality levels of the participant settings was reflected in the abilities of the children. Conversely however, it may also be because the demographics of the families attending the setting do not necessarily represent the demographics of the settings themselves. This is discussed

further, along with other limitations of the study, in the chapter that follows.

### **10.5: Alignment with philosophical stance**

As part of this research, participants were asked to represent the unseen ("what does a quality environment feel like?") and children were able to give similar responses to the adults when prompted and responded with phrases such as "happy", "good" and "happy not bored". Chng (2017:156) states that we should not 'avoid the invisible but look at it as an opening to undiscovered territory'. What was noticeable with regards to the children's responses was that they were only able to provide examples, when asked what would make the best nursery in the world, of that which was around them and they could relate to in a real-life context. They could only respond to what they were experiencing and not consider alternatives to the environment that they were in and they were not able to consider that which was not visible to them. This point aligns with the thoughts of Canning (2012) who states that we can only explain the concept of quality when we have experienced it and that personal explanations of such are extremely personal. As discussed in chapter 5, children are more likely to provide reliable responses to topics that concern them (Moss, 2001) and their responses indicated that they were content within the settings that they were situated and considered themselves to be within "the best nursery in the world". Gallagher and Gallagher (2008) allege that children are best placed to discuss areas that concern them and their responses in this area were therefore regarded as extremely valuable.

The views of the children and the views of participants, as documented in section 10.3 above, show the concept of intuition in practice. Damasio (2006:188) describes this as 'the mysterious mechanism by which we arrive at the solution of a problem without reasoning toward it' and in respect of this study this point is evidenced in the participants' responses in this study. Participants could articulate the need and the feelings

behind the concept of a HQE but, conversely, were not always able to articulate why. This alignment with the philosophy of transcendental idealism (Kant, 1781) highlights the need to combine rationalism and empiricism to gain a complete picture of a complex issue such as this.

## **10.6: Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter various elements of the TQAF have been discussed in relation to specific features that have been found to impact on the quality of children's utterances and it has been asserted that the quality of the environment does indeed impact upon the quality of speech. It should be concluded however that each of the 27 elements of the TQAF are equally important and all appear to impact on the quality of SL in the study settings. This point will be concluded further in chapter 12.

This chapter has discussed the implications of the findings of this study, in conjunction with the literature previously discussed within chapters two and three. The chapter that now follows, chapter 11, will critically review the study and consider the limitations of the project, the ethical concerns that this has raised and any other issues that were encountered.

# Chapter 11

## Critical review of research process

### 11.1: Introduction

This chapter addresses, and discusses, the limitations of this study, with attention given to the limitations of the research process, the ethical issues that arose and the research process issues that occurred. The chapter considers how limitations may have impacted on the findings of this research. I will also suggest how these issues could be overcome should a similar project be undertaken in the future.

It is recognised that:

... limitations are normal, it is statistically abnormal to do a limitations-free study. Furthermore, by explicitly stating the limitations of our work, we are really doing a service as such an act stimulates new research and provides us a chance to gain a better understanding of the world.

(Singh, 2015:4)

### 11.2: Issues within the research process

The research process was split into three phases and issues that limited the study that arose in each phase will now be discussed.

#### 11.2.1: Phase one: gathering stakeholder's perspectives

As was discussed in 5.4.1.1, the questionnaire approach was not productive, nor was it successful with the children when piloted. It was therefore necessary to adapt the research with the children in this phase to a prompt which encouraged children to engage and partake in a way that was comfortable to them. Although it was not the intention, a focus group was conducted with the children rather than the planned questionnaire. The prompt question centred around an activity with paper and pens to stimulate discussion (Gray, 2018) and once children began to engage, this prompted other children to join in and collaborate and

therefore they responded. Ethically this process felt much more comfortable and this showed 'ethical mindfulness' in action (Warin, 2011:810). No child was asked specifically to partake, they came of their own accord and one could argue that this then generated richer and more realistic data. Within the caveat of parental and setting consent, the children themselves, in this instance, were their own 'gatekeepers' (Nutbrown, 2010:10) and were given the opportunity to decide for themselves if they wanted to be involved in something that affected them (National Children's Bureau, 2003). Although multiple children were engaged with the activity at one time, it remained possible to capture each child's voice by careful listening and documentation. My previous practice and research experience with working with groups of young children put me in good stead for this and ensured all voices were heard. It is recognised that focus groups can generate a cascade effect, with views and opinions being generated as a result of one participant's input (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002) however in this instance, when working with young children in this way, it is argued that this was actually a benefit of this process. This cascade effect could, and did, prompt ideas from children about what "the best nursery in world" would look like, in a non-threatening manner.

When undertaking this focus group activity with the children, there was one occasion where a child was trying to contribute and put across their views, and it was not possible to ascertain what he was trying to say, due to a speech issue. This meant that however hard I tried, it was not possible to take his views into account as I could not understand him. The UNCRC (United Nations, 1989) asserts that children's voices can only be heard within research when allowed by an adult, and this concept was stretched in this instance as I felt unable to allow due to circumstances beyond my control. Chesworth (2018:860) argues that researchers should 'confront and acknowledge the uncertainty and messy elements of our research'. This 'uncomfortable reflexivity' (Pillow, 2003:175) was what occurred in this instance. The ethical dilemma was, should the child be questioned again until he could be understood, or a practitioner

consulted to translate, or should his input not be taken due to his communication issues? It is recognised that a fundamental concept and ethical consideration when researching with young children, should be focussing on 'maximising any benefits and minimising any risk or harm' (BERA, 2018:8). It was felt that less harm would be done to this particular child by not including his contribution than would be if his contribution to be understood was persistently sought. This 'uncomfortable reflexivity' was therefore an immediate response but, on reflection, was ethically the right decision.

### **11.2.2: Phase two: the development of the TQAF**

The development of the TQAF included responses from a range of stakeholders; parents, practitioners, "experts" and children. Katz (1994:206) asserts that 'the approach ..... of using multiple perspectives requires assessors to infer the feelings of children, parents and staff members'. She argues that 'it would be ethically unacceptable to put children in situations that might encourage them to criticize their caretakers and teachers.' The way that this research was undertaken, and the questions that were asked, did not require any inference as participants were able to state categorically their views and opinions. It could be argued that if children were questioned about the staff within the settings, and interactions, then this could have put them in a situation that provoked criticism of their adult carers, however this was not the case and was therefore not an issue. The environment was the topic of focus and therefore children were able to contribute freely without the fear of retribution.

There were no specific issues within this phase, apart from the problems with NVIVO (as discussed in section 5.4.2). This issue however, and the way that it was overcome, actually strengthened the analysis of the data and did not become a limitation of the study.

### **11.2.3: Phase three, part one: the capturing of the children's utterances**

When previous research had been carried out in this vein, and dictaphones were used for data collection, children remained aware of their presence throughout the research process (Richardson, 2019b). In this study children's speech was more naturalistic than when previously studied, and the body cameras assisted with this. Once they were strapped onto the children and switched on, the children invariably engaged with the environment without any attention to the cameras, and although Mukherji and Albon (2010:114) assert that children behave 'differently' when they are aware that they are being observed, this was not felt to be the case in this study. However, some children did retain an awareness of the cameras at times and this was usually when playing within the indoor environment. When watching back footage discussions around the presence of cameras were more likely to happen within the IC than anywhere else. Dickson and Roethlisberger (2003) believe that it is not possible to undertake research without any impact and it could be argued that neither should research occur without an awareness. It is argued that there should be an element of knowing from the children in order that they can continue to consent to participate. When selecting vignettes of speech to analyse it was essential that a sample was taken when the children did not appear to be conscious of the cameras, thus aiming for excerpts that were as naturalistic as possible. No noticeable difference in speech was noted in these vignettes so it is supposed that this impact was negated.

The field notes from setting two, visit three (appendix 16), noted that when accessing the recordings from this visit, it was discovered that 7 out of the 10 recordings were unsuccessful for various reasons and very little data was therefore captured (five children in two environments should have given ten recordings and only three were captured). The recordings were still transcribed and what was available was analysed as it was felt to be unethical to collect data and then not use it. Due to issues with schedules, this "visit" was undertaken without my presence. Instructions



had been left on how to operate the cameras and the practitioner had been tasked to capture the data. This was obviously not successful and also had the disadvantage of not allowing field notes to be taken. This highlights the importance of being present and adopting the role of 'observer as participant' (Johnson and Christensen, 2008:214). Although it was thought, because the situation required it, that this could be a solution it was not to be the case and the data from that occasion was not complete and did not provide the depth required.

The use of body cameras did have other issues. They worked very successfully when in normal use, capturing where children were engaged in the environment and capturing what was being said by the children and those around them. It was essential that recordings were transcribed as soon as possible after capturing the data. As mentioned, the cameras picked up speech from all of the children within the vicinity and it was therefore necessary that only the speech from the participant child was transcribed and analysed. The advantage of being present when recordings were captured was that an awareness of how children spoke was gained and their voices could then be identified when listening back to the recordings. The context was also very useful from being present, and by being able to view the activities that the child was engaged in. This ensured that the speech samples were accurately allocated to the child concerned.

The issue that did occur however with the recordings was that which was caused by the weather. At a habituation visit it was a wet day with persistent rain. The body cameras are supplied with waterproof cases for instances such as this and these cases were therefore fitted. These cases did not impact on what could be seen, however they did impact on the recording of sound. The microphone on the cameras was completely blocked by the waterproof casings and therefore no voice recordings were captured at all on that occasion. The main purpose of the cameras was obviously to record speech so this was a major issue. Silverman (2017)

discusses the complexity of using video recordings when analysing data once captured however there does not appear to be much written about the complexity of using these body cameras as research instruments. This is something that will be worthy of further documentation at a later date. For the duration of this research project, the other dates arranged for data collection were all fine weather and rain did not impact on recordings. One week at setting one was particularly hot however (see field notes, appendix 15) and children were playing with hose pipes. They had been told that they could not get the cameras wet and this resulted in them asking for cameras to be removed when engaging in water play and then them asking for them to be refitted when the play was over. This happened repeatedly throughout the session. It could be said that this impacted on the 'naturalistic approach' (Fawcett, 1996:13) that this research was striving for. To overcome this issue, attention was given to the sample vignettes that were selected for analysis. It was ensured that the vignettes selected were within a time when children were engaged in play and had been re-habituated to the wearing of the cameras (Bell, 2007). It is therefore hoped that the issue was addressed in the best way possible.

#### **11.2.4: Phase three, part two: the administration of the TQAF**

As previously discussed (section 5.6.1.1) the TQAF was administered in the last week of each setting's visit schedule and, where possible, it was administered by both myself and the research assistant. When setting one was assessed, the results for the FS and the OC were extremely similar from both viewpoints. However the assistant found it very difficult to rate the indoor environment using the TQAF. At the time of assessing the indoor environment there were no children in it and section 3, the atmosphere rating, in particular was found to be impossible to assess without seeing how children were interacting with the environment and how it was used. The scale was therefore completed by the assistant just on what she could see at that time and this was noted. I was able to complete the indoor assessment fully as I had seen it in use the week

before and could apply prior knowledge of how this room was used by children. This aligns with the concept of positionality (Reed, 2012; Katz, 1994) and caused complications in this instance, as Katz (1994) alleges it would. It could also be argued however that this could lead to enhance quality (Harrist *et al.*, 2007) as different viewpoints open up discussion and give space for reflection. This is therefore a point to note for future TQAF use and it should be recommended that the TQAF be administered by more than one person and discussed accordingly.

When administering the TQAF, both myself and the research assistant produced similar results. There were occasions however where our views differed. An example of this was within setting three, the environment ratings (section two of the TQAF) gave quite different scorings. The areas that differed noticeably were around the safety of the environment (element 2.6) and whether the environment was uncluttered (element 2.8). This highlights the subjectivity of the assessment process and confirms the views of Myobo (2017) who believes that assessment can be influenced by the particular views and focus of the appraiser. Harms *et al.* (2005) recognise that when immersed in an environment, it can impact on the way that this environment is viewed and analysed and it may be that this is what was occurring in this instance. As I had been attending the settings over a period of several weeks by the time the TQAF was applied, it could be argued that by this time I had become immersed within the environment, whereas the research assistant had not had this experience. It is argued that this dual lens approach therefore enhanced this aspect of the research and helped to overcome potential bias (Flyvberg, 2006).

It was also noted that the framework was purely a snapshot at the time that it was assessed (setting three, week three field notes – appendix 17). An example of this was when rating element 3.1: Acoustics. When I rated this element within the indoor environment I had observed this to be managed well and gave the maximum score as throughout my visits I had

observed this to be so. Towards the end of the session however I was aware that background music had been put on and as a result the overall noise level increased significantly. This would therefore have been scored differently if I had completed the TQAF after this observation. Reflecting on this process, this indicates that I was able to complete the TQAF based on the knowledge of the setting that I had accumulated throughout my visits whereas the research assistant was applying purely what was seen on the day of TQAF administration. Also, it is noted that the situation can change from one minute to the next and the assessment is very much a snapshot in time. Although this could be considered as a limitation, it is argued that this is no different from other quality assessment tools; the English inspection framework (Ofsted, 2018), ECERS (Harms *et al.*, 2005), SSTEW (Siraj *et al.*, 2015). All of these quality rating measurements assess the provision at one given point in time, therefore the TQAF is comparable in nature. For the purposes of research though, if this study was to be repeated, it may be beneficial to administer the TQAF on two separate occasions and compare the results. This could ascertain what impact this snapshot observation technique has on the results.

The section that follows will now discuss the ethical concerns that occurred throughout the study, the way that these were dealt with and how these concerns impacted upon the research process.

### **11.3: Ethical concerns**

As was discussed in chapter six, there is no such thing as no impact when undertaking research (Dickson and Roethlisberger, 2003), however this research strived to adopt 'ethical mindfulness' (Warin, 2011:810) to ensure that this impact was kept to a minimum and no harm was done to anyone involved.

#### **11.3.1: Participants of phase one**

It was argued in chapter six that all elements of the research, no matter who the participants, should maintain continuous ethical reflexivity (Cohen *et al.*, 2002). This reflexivity was found to be necessary when

interviewing one of the “experts” in phase one. One particular “expert” requested that she be sent the questions in advance, and then, when the interview was complete, she asked to be sent the transcript (appendix 33) to check for correctness prior to publication. She returned this transcript with track changes asking for slight alterations to be made (appendix 34), and then once alterations were made she stated that she would be happy with being named in the research. This provided two ethical conundrums. Firstly consideration had to be given as to how valid these responses were in comparison to others’ who had not had this opportunity. When comparing the changed transcript to the original however it was realised that it was more grammar issues that had been corrected and the essence of the responses remained the same. Robson (2011:134) talks of the need to ‘balance adaptiveness and rigour’ when undertaking a flexible design such as a case study. In this instance therefore the rigour was present and this data was included within the pool for analysis. The second conundrum that this posed was the issue of naming one participant and not others. Yin (2014) believes that the most desirable situation, when undertaking a case study, is that all details should be disclosed so that it is possible to identify contextual information and also easier for the data to be managed. It is argued that this is not possible when dealing with a research project such as this, which involves children (BERA, 2018; EECERA, 2015), however in the instance where a participant has requested that her name be included this was done by way of inclusion in the acknowledgements. If this project was to be undertaken again, all adult participants would have been given the opportunity to be named or to remain anonymous, therefore giving all the opportunity to receive credit for participation should they require it.

### **11.3.2: Children involved in phase three**

When undertaking previous research, I had identified ethical concerns over non-participant children (Richardson, 2019b) and the phrase “why haven’t I got one of those?” was one which was to be avoided throughout this study. Ethical consideration was applied so as not to upset children

who were not participating for whatever reason and therefore did not have cameras fitted. During week one, at setting two, one child began to get very upset because he had not got a camera. His parents had not given permission for him to partake in the research. By having spare cameras with me it meant that he was able to wear a harness and a camera and I advised practitioners that although I had set it recording, to prevent his distress, I would not include any of his data in the study. The recording would be deleted immediately. Palaiologou (2012:35) asserts that to conduct research ethically one should not 'violate children's dignity, rights and privacy'. This should be the case for the children who are non-participants also (Richardson, 2019b) and by reacting to the situation above this appeased the situation. When the practitioners explained what had happened to the parents, the parents then gave permission retrospectively. It was therefore possible for this data to be included.

On many occasions throughout phase three of the data collection, children asked for their cameras to be removed, and then subsequently replaced at a later point in the session. At all times their wishes were followed. Cocks (2006:258) states that researchers need to be 'vigilant to the responses to the child' for assent to be present. Consent at the outset was insufficient and the reality of this research indicated that 'process consent', ongoing consent throughout the process (Dockett *et al.*, 2012:248), was essential.

This process consent was most evident within setting four. Children from this setting were the least happy with taking part in the research and, although all parents had consented to their children taking part, children from this setting were the most likely to not want to engage or to ask to have the cameras removed after a short time. It was argued in section 6.2 that each participant should be treated as an individual and that ethical considerations be applied as required. Particular attention had to be paid in this setting to the need to tailor the approach to data collection, dependant on the situation (Punch, 2002). During week two at this setting, one practitioner suggested that children be encouraged to wear

the cameras by offering stickers or rewards for taking part. Wendler *et al.* (2002) claim that offering rewards for participation can distort the consent process and it was felt, in this instance, that the child's dissent should be treated seriously as a deliberate decision about participation (Dockett *et al.*, 2012:246) and respected accordingly. The practitioner's suggestion was therefore declined politely.

It should be questioned though why this setting, rather than others, was so noticeably different to the others, with children not being happy to partake in the research process. It could be that this was caused by the timing of this setting's visit. All of the other settings were visited at the end of the academic year where children were well settled, and getting ready for their transition to school. Setting four, due to sampling issues, was visited at the beginning of the academic year, with some of the children having only just started to attend the setting. It could be argued therefore that in order for children to be completely comfortable with engaging in something such as this research, they first need to be comfortable within their surroundings and have formed strong attachments to those around them. This research could be compared with the strange situation (Ainsworth, 1979), in that children are fearful of taking risks if not in a situation where they feel safe and supported by a significant adult. It may therefore be the case here that children did not feel comfortable due to the newness of the whole experience. It is also worth noting however that this setting was that which scored the lowest on the TQAF when all three environment scores were aggregated. As well as the attachment significance occurring within this setting it may also be that the quality of the environment has an impact on the children's ability to engage in new experiences and to have the confidence to try new things. This is beyond the realms of discussion within this study but could be an area for further investigation at a future point.

### **11.3.3: Research assistant**

The purpose of employing a research assistant, an independent assessor, was to help overcome bias and to increase validity around the administration of the TQAF (as discussed in 5.6.1.1) and it is argued that

this was a major benefit to this study. As discussed in chapter three, it could be argued that the TQAF as an assessment tool is only as effective as the person administering it and that individuals view environments differently, based on their own beliefs, experiences and knowledge (Brownlee and Berthelsen, 2006; UNESCO, 2015; Katz, 1994; Reed, 2012). The use of a research assistant as part of this process therefore limited this subjectivity as it provided a contrasting set of views, beliefs and knowledge to assess alongside mine. The results of the TQAF, it is argued, are therefore strengthened by this process.

What should be noted however is that one setting, setting two, were not happy with the research assistant attending and assessing their provision. This reinforces the view of Solberg (2014) that different stakeholders hold different views on what is considered acceptable or potentially harmful. This setting was part of a medium sized chain and permission was sought, by the setting manager, from the head office for this research to be undertaken. This process widened the net on the views sought on this process and indicates that the power for decision making is influential on localised decisions. This meant that the TQAF was only administered by myself in this instance. During completion the deputy manager of the setting was involved and gave her views to provide a wider perspective. It could be argued that this impacts on the TQAF results for setting two however as this rating scale has been administered in a total of four settings it is felt that the results obtained from setting two are representative of the overall picture gained from this process. In this situation the wishes of the setting were paramount and reflexivity on the process (Hesse-Bieber and Leavey, 2006) was essential to accommodate the ethical requirements throughout.

#### **11.4: Limitations of study**

The section that now follows will discuss the limitations of the study.

##### **11.4.1: Sampling**

Issues existed with regards to sampling. It was extremely difficult to recruit settings, with a total of twelve settings being approached to recruit



four settings to participate in the study. There were requirements of the participatory settings, in that they met certain demographic criteria (see 5.2.2) and that they also had regular access to a FS or NE. This resulted in all settings presenting with a very similar approach and ethos. The data was therefore collected within four settings that had a similar pedagogical approach and a similar view on what children required to enhance their development. They all followed the Reggio Emilia approach, believing that the environment is the child's third educator (Strong-Wilson and Ellis, 2007; Forman, 1998) and reflected a similar understanding in how children learn and develop (Brownlee and Berthelsen, 2006). It could therefore be argued that these findings are only applicable to settings which are similar in nature and although this is not felt to be the case, further research in this area would be necessary to allow for a wider pedagogical approach to be taken into account.

Although settings were selected for their location and their demographic location, so that a wide range of demographics could be researched, this did not necessarily mean that the children in attendance were from these areas. Some children, and families, travelled miles on occasions to access settings due to the setting's ethos and the perceived quality of the setting. The children monitored in phase three were therefore not necessarily representative of the location of the settings. Specific details were not obtained on each individual child's social class or whether they lived in a rural or urban environment, but it should be noted that just because they attended a setting in a particular area, it was not necessarily the case that their home status corresponded. If this research was to be undertaken again it would therefore be worthwhile gaining some more specific data about the children as well as the setting.

Timing of phase three was not consistent for all four settings. Due to problems in recruiting sample settings, setting four's data was captured at the start of the academic year, compared to other three settings which were visited, and data was captured, at the end of the academic year. It could therefore be argued that setting four's TTR data is not comparable

to the other three settings due to the children's stage of pre-school education. This should not however have an effect on the TQAF ratings. This was therefore considered when drawing conclusions from the findings.

When considering amalgamated TTR data for each setting (tables 9.1, 9.2, 9.3 and 9.4) results also show that the minimum average TTR was 54% (setting four in the IC) and the maximum average TTR was 67.1% (setting one in the OC). This disagrees with the findings from Miller (1981) and Klee (1992) who reported that the mean segmental type-token ratio generally produces a yield of 45%. It is argued that this is likely to be because in the sample of participants there were not children with diagnosed SL issues, although some were 'emerging', and all children were in settings that were rating 'good' or 'outstanding' (Ofsted, 2018b). This research process should therefore be repeated in the future in settings which are not rated so highly by Ofsted to ascertain if the association remains comparable.

When devising the methods for this study, section 5.3.4 stated that no stipulation was given as to whether children should be included who had EAL or SEND. No children were selected to participate in this study who met either of these criteria and this was representative of the demographics of each setting so is argued that this was, in each case, a 'valid sample' (Cohen *et al.*, 2002:98). Although it was a 'valid sample' though, this provides issues about generalisability for children who have EAL or SEND and this is something that needs investigating further in future studies. The generalisability of this research will now be discussed further in the section that follows.

#### **11.4.2: Generalisability**

The breadth of data gained within this multiple case study provides a robustness (Yin, 2014; Stake, 1995; Stenhouse, 1979) that would not have been possible by undertaking a single case study. Stenhouse (1979) asserts that case studies are only of use if the findings can be

applied to cases with similar attributes and this chapter has discussed how all settings, or cases, within this study had similar attributes. It is therefore proposed that this provides limited generalisability to this study.

Although it is asserted that some generalisability exists from this study, it is also recognised that there may be a need for practitioners to adapt the TQAF to suit their environments and pedagogy. It has been identified that the settings used for this study all had a similar ethos and had been separately judged to be of similar quality according to Ofsted criteria (the national regulator in England). It is recognised that practitioners should be viewed as the professionals that they are, with the appropriate knowledge and practice wisdom. This knowledge will allow them to adapt and apply the rating scales in a way that is suitable to their individual situation. This aligns with UNESCO's view (2015) which advocates for the need for a HQE to 'reflect local values and perspectives on young children's development'. It is therefore acknowledged that the TQAF may need further enhancements to ensure that it is appropriate to other play and learning environments and the quality therein.

One aspect that should be considered is that this research applies only to children who are being nurtured within an early-years environment and being cared for and educated by professionals. Future research, using the TQAF, would be beneficial within home care environments and other educational establishments with the aim of ascertaining if the association identified occurs outside of an early-years environment.

Bassey (1999:62) acknowledges that a 'theory-seeking and theory-testing case study' aids generalisability because, as the name suggests, the theory is sought and then tested. The phased approach to this study did just that – sought theory and tested it throughout and it is therefore argued that the findings are solid in respect of the study settings. It is recognised that further research is required to apply this theory further.

### **11.5: Conclusion**

Although the titles used throughout this chapter, “issues”, “concerns” and “limitations”, all appear to take the deficit approach, it is argued that to be able to acknowledge these and discuss them in the manner that this chapter has done, adds strength and validity to the research process. This ‘litany of limitations’ (Wolcott, 1990:56) has been discussed in depth and the chapter that now follows will conclude the thesis and begin to consider how this research can benefit the field of Early Years.

# Chapter 12

## Conclusion

### 12.1: Introduction

The aim of this study was to ascertain if factors in three different learning environment types for children aged 3-5 years, are associated with the quality of their utterances and if so, the nature and effects of those factors.

This comprehensive study has identified that the quality of young children's utterances does differ depending on the environment in which the children are playing and learning. Through the definition of the features of the environments it has been possible to devise a Transferable Quality Assessment Framework (TQAF) which identifies and assesses these features across different environments. Through empirical evidence it has been possible to establish what constitutes a high-quality learning environment for young children's SLD in the study settings and it is argued that there is an association between the quality of the environment and the quality of children's utterances in those settings. This study has indicated that the OCs in the study settings produced higher quality SL results for their children.

This chapter now concludes this study by documenting considerations for the future regarding implications for practice and for further research, and considers how this study contributes to wider knowledge both in the field of Early Years and research.

### 12.2: Summary of research objectives

The study objectives were:

1. To identify stakeholders' perspectives on defining features of an IC environment, an OC environment and a NE in the field of early childhood in England

2. To establish the impact of the environment on the quality of young children's utterances
3. To devise a framework that identifies features of early learning environments that may affect young children's SLD
4. To establish whether the quality of young children's utterances differ according to specific factors in NEs, IC environments and OC environments and what those specific factors are
5. To use results from Objectives 1-4 to establish evidence for what constitutes a high-quality learning environment for young children's SLD.

These objectives have been met in respect of the study settings and discussed throughout this thesis and evidence has been provided, in the form of the TQAF, to show what constitutes a high-quality learning environment for young children's utterances in those settings. Through analysis of speech quality (TTR analysis) alongside the application of the TQAF it has been evidenced that there is an association between the quality of the environment and the quality of children's speech in the study settings.

These findings can therefore inform future research and practice and the recommendations for these areas will now be discussed.

### **12.3: Recommendations and implications for practice**

With a study of this nature it is essential that there is a contribution to the wider community (Grant Rankin, 2019; Skilbeck, 1983); the field of Early Years, and the research field. These contributions and recommendations for future work, will now be discussed.

#### **12.3.1: Implications for practice within the field of Early Years**

When discussing implications for practice it is worth noting that the recommendations discussed apply only to ECEC within England. Chapter three alleged that a global concept of quality is both unnecessary and

maybe impossible (Moss *et al.*, 2016, Murray, 2017; Penn, 2011; Woodhead, 1996). The research that led this framework construction was undertaken within four ECEC settings in England and the TQAF should therefore be utilised within this context.

That said it is recommended, in the future, the TQAF be trialled in different environments and should be adapted as necessary. When considering different environments, such as parks, play areas, this could potentially be extended to Early Years provision in different countries also should the need arise. Any adaptations could then be shared with others, via a toolkit, that could allow the framework to be applied to any play/learning environment. I will pursue this project in the years that follow. The more data captured from the TQAF assessments, the more robust it can be considered to be for general application.

Woodhead (1996) asserts that the views on quality within ECEC appear to be dynamic in nature; continually evolving and subject to change. As a result of this it will be necessary to regularly review the TQAF to ensure that it remains current and contemporary, keeping in mind the key elements that the extant literature review on this subject determined, being that a HQE to promote SL requires:

- Rich and engaging holistic play activities
- Space and time in which to explore
- Culturally reflective environment
- Support with risk taking
- Encouraging the child's voice

The need for adult closeness and interaction in all environments should also be considered. Although phase one of this research prompted only one element of the TQAF to assesses the impact of others, it is has been recognised, as a result of the findings from this study, that this interaction

is essential (Tomasello, 2003) and should not be ignored when considering the impact of the environment on children's utterances.

If, by using the TQAF tool, settings are able to reflect on their provision and make small changes to enhance their environments, then it is argued that this can assist in producing HQEs which, in turn, can provide 'significant' benefits to the children within their care (Rentzou, 2017:667). It is recommended that Ofsted (DfE, 2017) place more emphasis on the effect of the environment when undertaking their inspections. It is noted that it is imperative that teaching and learning takes place within an environment (DfE, 2017) however it is argued, as a result of this study, that this teaching and learning would be enhanced greatly by having a HQE in which to do so. It is asserted therefore that Ofsted consider this within their inspections in the context of England.

Reed (2012:17) writes about 'favourable conditions for growing, learning, experimenting, listening and speaking' and, although Reed does not define these favourable conditions further it is claimed that the TQAF elements represent exactly that – the conditions that are required within an environment to promote SL. If more settings use the definitions of the TQAF and enhance their provision accordingly, this might lead to the conditions Reed (2012) referred to.

### **12.3.2: Implications for research practice**

This study has highlighted, and overcome issues, that can be communicated within the research world for the benefits of others. The innovative approach of using body-cameras to capture the data was not without its difficulties (see section 11.2.3 for details) and the knowledge of these issues can be used to shape research in the future.

The use of NVIVO was also not a straightforward process (see section 5.4.2) and communicating these issues, and the way that they were



overcome, by way of a future research journal article may benefit the wider research community.

Most importantly the generation of the TQAF is likely to assist future researchers. Previous research (Richardson and Murray, 2016) highlighted the lack of transportable analysis documentation. It is purported that this documentation now exists, and it can therefore be utilised for research purposes, both on a personal basis and in the wider research community.

### **12.3.3: Recommendations for future research**

For any research there will always be further information to seek and to explore. This study is no different.

Future research in this area should be undertaken into the effect of the TQAF within different environments, such as play areas, parks etc. It should be acknowledged that the TQAF has currently only been tested in three environments and there are so many possible learning environments. At this stage it is not possible to prove predictive validity and large-scale evidence would be needed to show that there is a generalisable benefit from the rating scale (Stenhouse, 1979; Gilbert, 2008). This wider application and any adaptations that are indicated of the TQAF would aid generalisability.

As this rating scale purposely did not focus on what is developmentally appropriate practice (Katz, 1994) it is argued that this will offer the breadth that is applicable to a variety of age ranges within ECEC. This claim needs to be tested for accuracy. This may be an advantage of the TQAF however as it is not related to curricula and will therefore not need to reflect political ideologies. It is therefore recommended that this TQAF be trialled with a variety of age groups and necessary adaptations be

made to ensure that it is applicable to a wider age range of children than the current 3 – 5 age bracket.

As discussed within the previous chapter, no representation was within the participant sample of phase three from children with SEND or EAL. It is therefore suggested that it would be worthwhile to undertake this research with children of this nature to assess the appropriateness, and the association, in these instances. Stenhouse (1979) went so far as to say that a case study was only of use if the findings can be applied to other cases with similar attributes and it is argued that children with SEND or EAL do not have similar attributes to the children within this study, hence the need to extend the research within this area.

One further aspect that would benefit from future research is around the range of quality types of setting. It is noted that all settings within the sample were of 'good' or 'outstanding' quality (Ofsted, 2018b) and it would be worthwhile exploring if the same association between HQE and utterances existed within settings that were rated lower by the inspectorate. This could also give more insight into the consent issues. The consent from children within setting four was less forthcoming and the children in this setting were less keen to wear the body cameras (see 11.3.2). This setting was that which was the lowest quality (when assessed by the TQAF) and it could be investigated if there is any connection with these two facts. It is therefore recommended that this needs further exploration.

Some elements of the TQAF (i.e. acoustics, variety of resources, how the environment feels), it could be suggested, impact on children's stress levels, both negatively and positively. It may therefore be that children's stress levels are different in different environments and this could be a large influence on SL, and cognitive development, however it could also be argued that a HQE should be one which reduces stress and enables

children to feel comfortable, secure and ready to learn and play. This was beyond the realms of this study and warrants further investigation.

Chapter ten mentioned that children did not access singing areas at all whilst engaged in free play during observations. It has not been established therefore whether these areas of the environment impact upon utterances. It is known that singing and music activities are beneficial to SLD (Hallam, 2017) however further investigation would be valuable into whether this is needed to be present within an environment at all times to fully benefit this area of development.

All of these areas for further research are things to consider in the future. What is recognised in the here and now though, is the contribution that this study makes, and this will be discussed below.

#### **12.4: Contribution to knowledge**

When considering the contribution that this study makes to knowledge it is appropriate to consider this both from an Early Years perspective and also a research method perspective. The section that follows addresses this.

##### **12.4.1: Contribution to Early Years knowledge**

In line with the interactionist approach, Pinker (1994) states that the environment is the fuel which assists the language development rather than being the motor. This research has defined what constitutes a premium level of fuel within four settings, and provides knowledge of how best to use the environment to support children's SLD in those settings. It aligns with views that interaction with the environment is crucial to development within this area (Tomasello, 2003; Aguiar *et al.*, 2017), and although it is acknowledged that interactions with others is also essential, this focus on the environment provides a depth to compare ECEC

environments, though as indicated further application of the TQAF, in different settings, would inform its value more generally. It is also strongly argued throughout this study that if a HQE does not exist then this cannot foster the quality interactions with individuals.

As previously stated no rating scale existed that could be transferred between ICs, OCs and NEs and the creation of the TQAF has the potential to provide knowledge about the key components within different environments that may enhance children's SLD.

#### **12.4.2: Contribution to knowledge about methods**

In addition to the contribution to knowledge from an Early Years perspective, it is also asserted that this study contributes to research methods, which in turn makes a contribution to the field.

Through the interpretivist paradigm (Yin, 2004), the TQAF has been designed to be transferable between environments in four settings and it may help future researchers to assess other environments and undertake research. This TQAF could be suggested to be an educative and tangible output from this research, which Stenhouse (1974) suggests is an aspect of interpretivist research. As this tool has been devised using multiple perspectives, (Katz, 1994) it is argued that this makes it applicable from other facets, though the limited range of those perspectives means this would first need to be tested. New voices have been included within this project and therefore the premise on which the TQAF is founded is sound, in respect of the study settings.

#### **12.5: Personal reflection on own learning**

The acknowledgements section of this thesis discussed this process as a journey and reflection on that journey has highlighted much learning but also personal development. In addition to the expansion of my knowledge

around methodological and philosophical approaches, and of course the impact that environments have on children's SLD, this journey has strengthened my confidence as a researcher and a presenter. I feel much more comfortable to present my work at national and international level as I feel sure that I can defend my research confidently. Bumps in the road on this journey, although at times felt they were taking me off track, strengthened my resilience and tenacity as this process has made me realise that I can accomplish anything with determination.

## **12.6: Conclusion**

This phased study, which adopted an interactionist inductive approach, did not provide certainty about the outcomes until the end of the study and the data has generated new theory in respect of the study settings (Neuman, 2003), believing that the quality of the environment does indeed influence the quality of young children's SL in those settings.

The philosophical approach of transcendental idealism Kant (1781) led this study and this 'cross-fertilisation' (Turner, 2010:vii) of theory has, it is argued, enhanced this study. The innovative approach of addressing rationalism and empiricism gave extra depth and aligned that which has been experienced (Skinner, 1957) along with that which is simply known (Chomsky, 1957).

Dahlberg *et al.* (2013:111) argue that attempting to define quality and take account of multiple perspectives is, in fact a 'wild goose chase'. It is argued that, in this study, multiple perspectives have been included and therefore the premise is sound. The 'goose' has been caught in respect of the study settings and it was worthy of the chase. If one child's SL can be enhanced because of this study, then that makes it worthwhile.

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## Appendix One



### Feedback from Research Ethics Committee

Student: Tanya Richardson

Date: 28 July 2016

Action required	Tick
No action required	✓
Submit amendments for Chair's Action	
Submit amendments for consideration by members by email	
Resubmit application to future REC meeting	

Decision relating to the proposal	Tick
Full approval was given	✓
Advisory comments were given	
Amendments are required before full approval can be given	
Approval in principle was given	
Amendments are required before approval in principle can be given	
In its current form, approval could not be given	

### Feedback on proposal

The comprehensive submission for full approval was received and full approval was given on the condition that the following two issues are resolved:

It was noted that your student number is included on the information sheet and it was felt this isn't helpful for the participants, so it is suggested that this is removed.

Ensure that in returning the consent form to the researcher, the participants are able to retain a copy of the participant information sheet.

Consider whether allowing withdrawal up to the point of the data being analysed is most appropriate. It was suggested that withdrawal prior to the analysis would be easier to manage.

### Advice and guidance:

Please note that if you have been asked to make amendments then you should include a cover note with your resubmission that notes the way(s) in which you have responded to RDB comments and suggestions. You should also highlight any changes made to the proposal (e.g. by using a different ink colour).

The Committee dates and deadlines for submission can be found in the

The Chair of the Board/Committee can be contacted via the Graduate School if you have any questions about this feedback.

**Appendix Two**  
**Pilot Semi-structured interview questions for stakeholders**  
**(experts/parents/practitioners)**

Role.....

1. How would you define the following environments:
  - a. Indoor classrooms
  - b. Outdoor classrooms
  - c. Natural environments?
2. With regards to playing and learning, please describe to me what you feel constitutes a:
  - a. quality indoor environment
  - b. quality outdoor environment
  - c. quality natural environment

3. Please tell me how you think these different environments can benefit speech and language development.

a) indoor environment

b) outdoor environment

c) natural environment

4. What, in your opinion, is a quality environment with regards to speech and language development?

5. What elements are essential in order to promote speech and language development?

6) You are going to design the perfect environment to promote speech and language development. What would the three most important elements be for you, in order of importance?

7) What does a quality environment FEEL like to you?

Thank you for taking the time to undertake this research.

### **Appendix Three**

#### **Semi-structured interview questions for stakeholders (experts/parents/practitioners)**

**Role.....**

6. How would you define the following environments:

a. Indoor classrooms

b. Outdoor classrooms

c. Natural environments?

7. With regards to playing and learning, please describe to me what you feel constitutes a:

a. quality indoor environment

b. quality outdoor environment

c. quality natural environment

8. Please tell me how you think these different environments can benefit speech and language development.

c) indoor environment

d) outdoor environment

c) natural environment

9. What, in your opinion, is a quality environment with regards to speech and language development?

10. What elements are essential in order to promote speech and language development?

6) You are going to design the perfect environment to promote speech and language development. What would the three most important elements be for you, in order of importance?

7) What does a quality environment FEEL like to you?

Thank you for taking the time to undertake this research.

## **Appendix Four**

### Semi-structured interview questions for children (Transcript for child 1)

Gender.....Female.....

Age.....5.....

11. Can you tell me about:

a. Your indoor classroom

It's not cold and it has teddies

b. Your outdoor classroom

It's loud when all of the people are in it

There is a table that teachers do maths on with the children and there are games on it

c. Your forest school?

There is a front area and a back area. It has a book area in it.

12. , When you play and learn, please describe to me what makes:

a. Your indoor classroom good?

We get to do maths and handwriting. I liked it when the roleplay area was an aeroplane – I wore a hat.

b. Your outdoor classroom good?

It has a marble run. Mrs V took all of the water out but I liked it when it was there. The sand is good and the puppet show.

c. Your forest school good?

The secret garden.



13. Please tell me how you think these different areas can help you with learning new words. .

e) Indoor classroom

f) outdoor classroom

c) forest school

I read cards with new words on when I was outside

14. What do you think makes a really good area to help you to learn new words? ,

Tricky words – you have to have lots of practice. The tricky words are white and the other words are all different.

15. What must you have in the classroom or outside, to help you learn new words?

*She got bored here and wandered off.*

6) If you could make the best indoor or outdoor space to help you to talk, what would the three most important things be, in order of importance?

*This question was missed out as participant was getting bored*

7) If you have somewhere that is good to play and learn in, how does it make you feel?

Happy

Semi-structured interview questions for children (Transcript for child 2)

Gender.....Male.....

Age.....5.....

16. Can you tell me about:
- a. Your indoor classroom

- b. Your outdoor classroom

- c. Your forest school?

*This question was scrapped due to the last questionnaire taking too long and the child getting bored*

17. , When you play and learn, please describe to me what makes:
- a. Your indoor classroom good?

We make cakes. When I am putting pencils in the wall and smack them well. The sandpit cos I can make sandcastles

- b. Your outdoor classroom good?

We can make cakes in the mud kitchen. Water play is fun cos we can make a big mess. We have a water trough – it's over there. A big one!

- c. Your forest school good?

We go down and see the horsey swing and that thing that burns marshmallows. We saw an arrow showing the way to go It said that way. The arrow sign was a bit wonky.

18. Please tell me how you think these different areas can help you with learning new words. .

- g) Indoor classroom

Teachers help us learn new words

- h) outdoor classroom

By going on top of that tree (*NB – this tree was not within the nursery but just within child's vision as he spoke*). There's bananas in that tree, and playing in the sand pit

c) forest school

Picking grass and digging underground. Playing with my friends – when I get older I'll be a boy sister!

19. What do you think makes a really good area to help you to learn new words?

To go in a boat – I haven't got a boat at home. Different things to play with. At home I've got a field and things grow. You can eat some things and not eat some things. You can't eat chilli peppers.

20. What must you have in the classroom or outside, to help you learn new words?

*He was getting bored here so question skipped.*

6) If you could make the best indoor or outdoor space to help you to talk, what would the three most important things be, in order of importance?

Good things – nursery rhymes and reading a story.  
And I would have a hedge trimmer then I could cut your eyes and your nose.

7) If you have somewhere that is good to play and learn in, how does it make you feel?

Happy – not sad.

## Appendix Five

**From:** Tanya Richardson [<mailto:Tanya.Richardson@northampton.ac.uk>]

**Sent:** Tuesday, December 19, 2017 8:13 AM

**To:**

**Subject:** Research assistance

I am very aware that this is a busy time of year - I wonder if you have a moment to consider my request below?

I am currently undertaking a PhD at Northampton University and I am about half way through my PhD now; researching the impact of different environments (indoor/outdoor/forest schools) on young children's speech and language development and looking at whether the quality of these environments makes a difference.

The first thing I need to do is to work out what a quality environment is - which is not as easy as it sounds!!!

I want to research in both rural and urban settings from various demographic backgrounds - but all settings must engage in forest school type activities. I note from your website that you do this and I wondered if you would mind, as a setting, participating in this first stage of my research?

If you did feel able to find out more about this then I can come along to have a chat to you about this first and then, if you are happy to participate, then I could come back another time and interview a couple of practitioners, a couple of parents and some children, about their views on quality. I obviously need permissions for all of this hence me discussing it first and then coming back to carry it out.

The advantage for you of taking part in this is that I could give you a report of what I found out at your setting and this would be fantastic evidence for Ofsted for your SEF.

Please don't feel any obligation to take part in this - but if you are interested and able perhaps we could arrange a time and then we can discuss it further? Again, if I come for a chat and you decide not to participate then that will be fine.

Look forward to hearing from you soon

Best wishes

Tanya

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## Appendix Six

①  
Resources

Overall  
②  
Environment

Appendix four  
③  
Atmosphere

### Nodes

Name	Sources
definition of outdoor classroom	(
open space	9
covered	2
fresh air	5
structured activities	5
promotes physical development	12
resources that are more natural than indoors	12
lack of furniture	1
similar to indoors	16
feeling elements	7
still has boundaries	1
opportunity for adventure	2
purposely designed	1
less sterile than indoors	4
child led	2
louder	2
definition of forest school	(
no boundaries	5
natural resources	25
no structured activities	5
connection with nature	17
use senses more	2
opportunity for exploration	4
risk	3
child led	2
physical activities	2
big space	1
exposure to dirt	2
definition of indoor classroom	(
dominant place for play and learning	4
Non physical	5
Divided into areas	13
Designed to aid development	10
Restricting	9
Lack of natural light or exposure to elements	6
Sound levels	3

## Nodes

Name	Sources
Structured	11
Safe and homely	5
adult led	3
toys and resources to aid learning	8
low adult to child ratio	2
clean and sterile	2
man made	2
stimulating	1
What is a quality indoor environment	
Uncluttered	3
Resources	24
Atmosphere	10
People	5
Safe	4
cover learning outcomes	7
childrens interests	15
natural resources	6
planned	2
no funny smells	1
space	5
varied	7
child led	7
freedom	1
transportable resources	3
familiar experiences	4
grown ups	4
open ended resources	3
promotes teamwork	1
quiet spaces	2
mark making	1
What is a quality outdoor environment	
Learning opportunities	8
Resources	13
Staff	5
Variety of experiences	13
opportunity for physical development	8

## Nodes

Name	Sources
structure	2
element of risk	2
safe and secure	4
space	3
freedom	3
child led	8
transportable resources	2
familiar experiences	1
opportunity for imagination	4
natural resources	6
opportunity to play with others	3
wildlife	5
messy play	1
open ended resources	3
quiet space	1
colourful	1
What is a quality natural environment	(
Variety of experiences	16
Wildlife	7
Adequate risk	14
Space	9
follow childs interests	7
Freedom	6
supportive adults	9
encourages development but not explicit	2
allows child to get messy	4
natural resources	11
familiar experiences	4
opportunity to play with others	4
prompts imagination	3
resources	4
open ended resources	3
Quality indoor environment for S & L	(
correct amount of resources	2
sound levels	1
adequate space	1

## Nodes

Name	Sources
books	4
child led activities	2
Modelling of language	4
resources to promote language	6
adult support	3
Quality outdoor environment for S & L	(
correct stimulation	1
resources	6
sound management	1
space	4
boundaries	1
child led activities	2
adult support	4
Quality natural environment for S & L	(
variety of resources	6
New experiences	5
Smaller groups	2
Space to talk and discuss	3
space	2
child led activities	2
adult support	4
risky play	2
Three most important elements for S & L	(
Space	5
Provocations	13
Sound management	2
Outdoor access	11
Natural resources	8
Books	10
Singing area	4
relevant games and activities	4
supportive adults	14
curriculum	2
Sensory things	5
Follow childrens interests	5
appropriate risk	3



## Nodes

Name	Sources
<input type="radio"/> variety of resources	7
<input type="radio"/> quiet area	9
<input type="radio"/> mark making materials	8
<input type="radio"/> free flow	7
<input type="radio"/> time	2
<input type="radio"/> physical activities	2
<input type="radio"/> small groups	1
<input type="radio"/> peer interactions	3
<input type="radio"/> open ended resources	2
<input type="radio"/> technology	2
<input type="radio"/> real life experiences	1
<input type="radio"/> How quality makes you feel	(
<input type="radio"/> Warm and cosy	6
<input type="radio"/> Stress free	1
<input type="radio"/> Relaxed and calm	15
<input type="radio"/> inspired	1
<input type="radio"/> Feel like home	3
<input type="radio"/> Interested	5
<input type="radio"/> comfortable	7
<input type="radio"/> happy	16
<input type="radio"/> confident	1
<input type="radio"/> safe	6
<input type="radio"/> brilliant	1
<input type="radio"/> feels like children	1
<input type="radio"/> alive	1
<input type="radio"/> feels like love	2
<input type="radio"/> sad as separated from parent	1
<input type="radio"/> good	2
<input type="radio"/> How does indoor help S & L	(
<input type="radio"/> learning based on interest	5
<input type="radio"/> Quieter environment	2
<input type="radio"/> Easier to observe children and help development	2
<input type="radio"/> Books	5
<input type="radio"/> mark making	1
<input type="radio"/> interaction with others	6
<input type="radio"/> relationships with peers	3

## Nodes

Name	Sources
play opportunities	4
singing activities	1
adult support	1
How does outdoors help S & L	(
Variety of things to talk about	10
lack of boundaries	3
spontaneity	4
support from others	3
more of a sensory experience	5
space to be more physical	1
space to have solo time	1
encourages imagination	1
new experiences	2
reflects interests	2
How does natural env help S & L	(
spaces to talk to each other	5
enthusiasm	4
it's real	3
freedom to make mistakes	2
spontaneity	3
variety of things to talk about	11
support from others	4
more of a sensory experience	4
less boundaries	3
encourages imagination	5
time for reflection	3
less resources	2
space for physical activity	1
more exploratory	2
new experiences	2
overall quality re S & L	(
listen to children	3
expand knowledge	6
foster imagination	2
role modelling	11
parental involvement	2

## Nodes

Name	Sources
more knowledgeable other to support	19
real life experiences	5
appropriate use of space	2
provocations	14
feeling of safety	3
books	6
time	4
child led experiences	8
quiet spaces	6
repetition	1
noise management	2
impact of light	1
freedom	7
natural resources	3
homely	1
smaller groups	1
story scribing	1
group activities	4
technology	1
mark making	1
open ended resources	2
element of structure	1
Shouldn't be a differentiation between environments	2

## **Appendix Seven**

1 **Phase One - Setting One - Practitioner Interview. (PA1, S1)**

2 Role - Second in charge of Yurt classroom. Started at setting three weeks ago. Defines  
3 herself as an EAL nursery nurse. Female practitioner.

4 I = interviewer

5 R = respondent

6

7 N.B. – This respondent spoke English as an additional language and therefore preferred to  
8 read the question through to herself rather than be asked it.

9

10 I – Can you please define for me an indoor classroom?

11 R - indoor classrooms rooms where the children spend most of the time, sitting and is usually  
12 divided by maths zone, language zone, craft area and it has to be rich with the things that  
13 which develop their speech, their physical skills, communication skills, Yes.

14 I - yes okay and the outdoor classroom?

15 R - I've noticed that many children prefer spending time outside so I know that you have to  
16 move those zones to the outdoor areas too because some children does not feel really  
17 comfortable being inside especially for boys, from my experience. They prefer the outdoor  
18 classrooms, so for me I prefer setting up the outdoor classroom as rich as the indoor one is.

19 I - So is it an extension to the indoors?

20 R – yeah an extension to the indoors.

21 I - okay lovely and natural environments?

22 R - I understand the natural environments in both ways. It can be somewhere where they feel  
23 that they can play spontaneously and where they feel a connection with nature. It doesn't  
24 have to be a wood or a forest or a playground. It could be anywhere, any place they like  
25 spending time in, in different natural environment.

26 I -okay lovely.

27 R- (reading prompts) With regards to playing and learning, please describe to me what you  
28 feel constitutes a quality indoor environment.

29 I – you've defined it, so what now makes it quality?

30 R- I think the quality means that it has to cover all the early learning requirements so it has to  
31 cover all of the areas. It has to provide all of the resources to develop communication,  
32 mathematical skills, creative skills and they have to be based inside like here we are basing

33 them on the children's interest so what the child is bringing from their own interest from their  
 34 own houses we can set them up indoors so that's quality indoor environment. Now for the  
 35 outside. I've probably answered that question a little bit in question number one. Quality  
 36 indoor environment also has to cover all those areas mathematical, communication,  
 37 relationships, physical. Yeah it's more about physical skills too.

38 I – what in the outdoor environment?

39 R – Yes, yes. The outdoors is more about physical yes I would say.

40 I – what makes it a quality environment then?

41 R – It has to develop all sorts of muscles skills and what else can I say. I don't know –  
 42 maybe ask me something more precise and I'll be able to answer.

43 I - if you are going to set up a quality outdoor environment what would you feel you needed  
 44 to put in it?

45 R – Oh observing children. Some children need some sort of support with jumping up or  
 46 some sort of obstacle courses and some children just need to practice their balancing skills  
 47 and some children just need to learn be aware of other children and to be run freely around  
 48 other children. Yeah.

49 I - so what you're saying is that quality environment depends on the children?

50 R – Yes.

51 I – Yes. Ok.

52 R – And the natural environment. So when we go in the forest or whether I want to spend  
 53 time in and it has to follow their interests too and it has to cover again the zones and be based  
 54 on their interests and ...

55 I - In the natural environment?

56 R - yes the natural environment and....and they can move things from their interests from the  
 57 indoor or the outdoor to the natural environment or take something from the natural  
 58 environment back to the outdoor or indoor classrooms.

59 I – transfer the resources?

60 R – yes.

61 I - okay lovely thank you. So how do you think that these environments help speech and  
 62 language development?

63 R - and the indoor environment. Children can access..... sorry can you ask me again?

64 I - how do you think the indoors helps children speech and language develop?

65 R - outside it depends on what she is setting up on the basis of their interests. Maybe for a  
66 practitioner it's easier to observe children and build up their vocabulary because sometimes  
67 it's more quieter and we can focus more like if I spend time with the children outside I can  
68 easily focus on one or two children to build up their vocabulary because some of the children  
69 who choose to go outside just run freely and it's not really easy to stop them and talk about.  
70 It is different in the forest - in the forest they have some different rules and they can  
71 ummm....even around the campfire they can talk and then we can ask them but when they  
72 run freely it's not easy to build up their vocabulary. To learn they talk between each other  
73 but for me it's not as easy as it is indoor.

74 I - so inside is easier to observe?

75 R - yes exactly!

76 I - because the children are contained almost?

77 R - yes, yes but for example the outdoor environment or the natural environment is set up  
78 itself sometimes so that's just something they can focus on which I wouldn't even think about  
79 that would be interesting for them. An indoor one is more like, just more up to me to set it  
80 up, more of what I think that they are interested in. If that makes sense?

81 I - yes it does. So it's more planned in the indoors?

82 R - yes it's based on children's interests but I am the one who decides how to set up where  
83 the natural environments they can, like I said, they can even choose something which  
84 interests them that I wouldn't even think about.

85 I - Yes. What about the outdoors does that kind of fit between the two of those?

86 R - yes

87 I - so the indoors you said is more planned, you can observe the children easily and the  
88 natural environment was kind of the contrast to that.

89 R - Yes. I would say that they are both building up vocabulary equally when there are  
90 different sorts of other words or. Outdoor environments - what I observed outside is that  
91 they are just communicating between each other rather than rather than being helped with  
92 vocabulary.

93 I - okay that's fine. Lovely. It's question four now - so what in your opinion is a quality  
94 environment with regards to speech and language development?

95 R - Urr yes. The quality environment has to be built on children's interests and then you can  
96 extend it. You can use all sorts of materials and things that you have available so they can be  
97 everything what they bring from home, or the cards with the words or pictures. The quality is  
98 just not something to set it up once, it changes and you have to observe children and the  
99 quality has to improve all the time. It depends on what children's, what sort of interests they

100 have and you have to work individually like with vocabulary. I know I use the word  
 101 vocabulary too often.

102 I – No you don't. It's fine.

103 R - it's just you have to observe them to, in some children you need to extend it as much as  
 104 you can in order to maybe, to work with them to focus on new subjects.

105 I – Ok

106 R – Now I've seen question number five. I've just thought about the book corner. That's  
 107 very helpful. Even each morning when we start at circle time if they start from singing or  
 108 talking about the days or starting a day by reading a book - that's how we start the day with  
 109 promoting speech and language. So using our books from the library. They can also bring  
 110 their ideas, their books that they read at home or they can discuss about them.

111 I – so we need books to promote speech and language, circle time, singing

112 R - yes and for the EAL children we need flashcards with words. Lots of circle time games  
 113 where you can promote all sorts of grammar words.

114 I – Lovely, thank you. Smashing thank you - anything else that you think is necessary to  
 115 promote speech and language? So you talked about resources - anything else that you think?

116 R - it has to be like urrr - the practitioner has to be a good role model to promote proper  
 117 speech and the practitioner's role is to promote and encourage them. They need to speak  
 118 loud, express themselves and you can also do lots of mouth exercises to.....Ummmm I think  
 119 if I had a chance to prepare it's flashing in my head. There can even be some exercises  
 120 outdoors or in the natural environment when they can use straws or blow leaves or anything  
 121 which will help their speech.

122 I – that's fine. You're nearly there, you'll be pleased to know!

123 R - if I only knew what the next question was because my Masters research was quite similar  
 124 it was how do you develop their speech and language skills when it comes to writing skills in  
 125 key stage two.

126 I – Oh right! So not far off! We're on question six – you'd rather read it yourself!

127 R – read aloud question 6. Ah yes - I like, I used to like things or areas to be labelled so I  
 128 know that everything is labelled and descriptions or words to relate to those things. I like to  
 129 have my perfect environment would be rich of books, cards, magazines, newspapers and they  
 130 don't have to be related to the child's level. They could be anything, they could see  
 131 everything - things wider. That skill is... it's for the life skill I think. Yes, and the third thing  
 132 would be to promote speech and language in a different way rather than traditional reading  
 133 and writing. I would be some sort of games where they are not fully aware that they are  
 134 learning but just practising to speak and clearly and building up vocabulary free-flow games.

135 I – Yes, lovely number. Now question seven is a bit different to what you have been talking  
136 about so far. A quality environment has a feel to it doesn't it? You know you walk in – say  
137 you're looking around a house. People say they walk through the door and it just feels right.  
138 Just like parents say when they walk into nursery sometimes don't they? It feels right. So if  
139 it's a quality environment what does it feel like to you?

140 R - okay. I probably will feel inspired. I would feel just like home. I wouldn't feel bored. I  
141 will feel like constantly inspiring and interesting and I would probably feel comfortable. Yes.

142 I - is there anything else that you want to add? You don't have to.

143 R – Ummm no.

144 I – No. That's fine. Okay we're finished then. Thank you very, very much



1 **Phase One - Setting One - Practitioner Interview. (PA2, S1)**

2 Role – Deputy in baby room (aged one to two). Step up into manager's role when manager is  
3 absent. Communication champion and recently been ICan accredited. Female practitioner.

4 I = interviewer

5 R = respondent

6

7

8 I - Okay so the first thing I want to ask is firstly how would you define these following  
9 environments - so how would you define an indoor classroom.

10

11 R – ummmm.

12

13 I - to an alien! Who knows nothing about an indoor classroom.

14

15 R – a room with four walls. Could be quite constricting really. Words on a board that mean  
16 nothing to you. Pictures that you might be able to relate to. But having texture - things to  
17 touch, learn through smell, touch, taste. Use your senses to make some sort of language  
18 whether verbal or just expression really.

19

20 I - so you said quite constricted. What do you mean by constricted? Because of the fact that  
21 you've got these words that might not mean anything and pictures?

22

23 R - yes and it's, it's a box isn't it with the walls and the ceiling. There is some natural light  
24 coming in through the windows but there is no fresh air so you've got to go through the door  
25 to get to the outside environment.

26

27 I - which leads me very nicely onto outdoor classrooms. How would you define outdoor  
28 classroom?

29

30 R – A wide open space.

31

32 I – I should say I'm dividing an outdoor classroom and a natural environment, so yes, an  
33 outdoor classroom?

34

35 R – Yes, yes still open as in there might be any walls, there might be boundaries but you  
36 could see beyond those so you would be using your senses. You're feeling all of the natural  
37 elements of the weather and the smells so really it's never ending, it's continually growing.

38

39 I - what would happen in that environment?

40

41 R - ummm I think in the natural environment and outdoor classroom yeah everybody  
42 becomes more used to their senses and aware of the world around them and what you can use  
43 things for - make a paintbrush out of a bit of tree and I just think it's, it's just being in touch  
44 with that outside natural area for children and adults.

45

46 I - okay so with regards to playing learning can you tell me what you think constitutes a  
47 quality indoor environment?  
48  
49 R - I think letting the child follow their interest. See what they pick up - what they are going  
50 to do with it? Why can't a pinecone be a hat? All those sorts of things. Not prejudging what  
51 this item is for really.  
52  
53 I - open ended resources?  
54  
55 R - yes most definitely.  
56  
57 I - what about an outdoor play space?  
58  
59 R - well yes!  
60 I - We've got the outdoor environment as in an outdoor classroom and then we have a natural  
61 environment so I'd like to separate those two if possible.  
62  
63 R - I think for the outdoor classroom because there is no walls and no ceiling you've got the  
64 sky to look at so...if you're in a room you may not always be aware that the sun is out but if  
65 you're outside you are. So you're feeling all of those sort of things. Even though in our  
66 nursery we are providing pretty much the same resources, children can get so much more  
67 from the outside classroom. Being out there, learning to cope with the change of  
68 temperature, understanding that in the sun you need your hat, in the winter you need your  
69 woolly hat. What rain does, how it falls, how it drips off something. All of those sort of  
70 things just can't make manually.  
71  
72 I - so what makes that quality then?  
73  
74 R - Because it's natural. Because it occurs naturally and children are naturally curiosity -  
75 they've got a natural curiosity. Why is it doing that? Let me investigate. Why does the  
76 water drip off there and into that pot? Why is it running that way? why does snow fall on the  
77 ground and not suddenly melt? All of those sorts of questions.  
78  
79 I - what then is a quality natural environment?  
80  
81 R - just giving the children the chance to experience that if they want to be outside let them  
82 be outside. It doesn't matter whether it's cold or not - you know some children are happy to  
83 be cold and explore in the outside. I think children just naturally drawn to the outside  
84 environment. I think. I find working in a building all day, it's quite restricting isn't it? I  
85 want to go out and get some fresh air and children they want to just run and have that  
86 freedom.  
87 I - so they want space?  
88  
89 R - They do. Space to do what they want as well and you don't always have to be right in the  
90 middle of what they're doing. They might not need you.  
91  
92 I - Okay lovely. Can you tell me then how you think these different environments can  
93 benefit speech and language development? So indoor environment first?  
94

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47 quality indoor environment?  
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65 you're outside you are. So you're feeling all of those sort of things. Even though in our  
66 nursery we are providing pretty much the same resources, children can get so much more  
67 from the outside classroom. Being out there, learning to cope with the change of  
68 temperature, understanding that in the sun you need your hat, in the winter you need your  
69 woolly hat. What rain does, how it falls, how it drips off something. All of those sort of  
70 things just can't make manually.  
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75 they've got a natural curiosity. Why is it doing that? Let me investigate. Why does the  
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77 ground and not suddenly melt? All of those sorts of questions.  
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83 be cold and explore in the outside. I think children just naturally drawn to the outside  
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85 want to go out and get some fresh air and children they want to just run and have that  
86 freedom.  
87 I - so they want space?  
88  
89 R - They do. Space to do what they want as well and you don't always have to be right in the  
90 middle of what they're doing. They might not need you.  
91  
92 I - Okay lovely. Can you tell me then how you think these different environments can  
93 benefit speech and language development? So indoor environment first?  
94

145  
146 I - yes!  
147  
148 R – Yes – that led us looking into his body and the skin and the bone inside and he could  
149 relate it to a living thing outside as well. So things like that. Things like that fascinate me  
150 because children see things different to an adult and it's that then curiosity and in turn that  
151 makes them ask questions, communicate more, be inquisitive about anything and everything.  
152 Give them a paper roll and it can be anything. Where ever they want to take it but we have to  
153 support that with their language and communication.  
154  
155 I – Lovely. thank you. What elements are essential to promote speech and language  
156 development? I think you might of already said that actually.  
157  
158 R – Yes, I think being a good role model. Making sure, you know, that your parents are on  
159 board as well because children learn a lot from home. Books and things are very important to  
160 identify first pictures and being at their level, talking to them, taking them seriously about  
161 something they're trying to say. Okay it all helps their development.  
162  
163 I - Thank you. So you're going to design the perfect environment for speech and language  
164 development. What are the three most important things that you're going to put into it?  
165  
166 R - Well for me I'd have to have an outside area. A bit like our yurt. I used to work in there  
167 and for me that is the ultimate. We could fling the door open and the outside is on the  
168 doorstep. So that's very important but also things like books. Books for babies with pictures  
169 in as well and just experiencing different, like the sand shed. Even though it's an indoor area  
170 we've gone outside to get in there. It's a totally different area. Lots to do. Lots to talk about.  
171  
172 I - okay this is the last question. You know when you go into a new house, people say it just  
173 feels right. Parents say it when they come round nurseries don't they? They say it just feels  
174 the right place for my child. What does a quality environment feel like to you?  
175  
176 R - I think to feel like they're respected. That whatever they say about their child you are  
177 going to do that. They do it and you're going to do it.  
178  
179 I - So to be interested?  
180  
181 R – Yeah. To make sure as well like this morning I had a little girl who has done her all  
182 about me settling for tomorrow. And to spend some time getting to know that child so mum  
183 knows that you are going to be part of their world and she can tell you anything.  
184  
185 I – Yeah - do you feel like quality.... do you feel that intrinsically yourself?  
186  
187 R – Yes!  
188  
189 I - How does that make you feel yourself?  
190  
191 R - Warm and fuzzy! But when I came to look at this nursery, there was only one way I  
192 could describe it and that was blown away. I've worked in a lot of nurseries and this just took  
193 my breath away and you know that scenario like I can't take it all in? It was like a train going  
194 past and I went home and “there was this and there was this, ooh, let me tell you, there's a

195 sand tray ...blah blah blah blah blah” and I think that sometimes when our children come in,  
196 it's an Aladdin's Cave. They're like “wow, look at all of this” and if you've got the right  
197 people then that's everything isn't it?  
198  
199 I - Beautiful! Thank you, you are finished. Thank you very much.  
200  
201

1

2 **Phase One - Setting One - Parent Interview. (PA3, S1)**

3 Role – Mother of a child (son) in pre-school. He attends the forest school and the outdoor  
4 class.

5 I = interviewer

6 R = respondent

7

8 I - So first of all then what I'd like to ask you is how would you define these environments.  
9 Can you give me a definition of your belief of what an indoor classroom is?

10 R - Four walls. Various different activities for preschoolers to engage with, play with, get  
11 involved with. Yeah, very much in my opinion it's confined.

12 I – Yeah, that's lovely and outdoor classroom? So I'm differentiating between outdoor  
13 classrooms and natural environments; forest schools. So first of all we will look at the  
14 outdoor classrooms.

15 R – Okay. They're out in the fresh air. They haven't got the restrictions of the four walls.  
16 It's more, in my opinion, it's a more open environment. A place to learn in and I think you've  
17 got more possibilities because, for me, being in a room in itself is a box. When you've got  
18 open air, if it's open, then certainly from an adult's perspective, if I'm in a room then perhaps  
19 my way of thinking will be more enclosed but if I'm in a field or if I'm in the woods then I  
20 think a bit more wider so I would expect the children to do the same.

21 I – And in a natural environment?

22 R - oh well that's just a free space isn't it? That means your thoughts, imagination, things  
23 you can do, the physical side of it, you're free aren't you? Obviously they're not just let free  
24 but your thoughts and what you can do is even more and less than an outside classroom  
25 because you've got logs, you've got bugs, you've got wildlife, you've got trees and they learn  
26 from everything rather than just the activities that they do in there and then. Because there  
27 might be a bird fly over and if they are in an indoor classroom they won't see that. It might  
28 be happening but they wouldn't be able to see it and then straightaway their learning what  
29 that bird is and the physical attributes of that bird. I'm talking from my and my child's point  
30 of view because from a very early age we spent a lot of time outside. We have dogs and most  
31 of the time we spend outside at home and when we are out and about. From a very early age  
32 he knew what a squirrel was and he knew what squirrels ate, where they lived. He knows  
33 what a kite is. You know how they don't hunt, they just gather. So I think from that  
34 perspective it's not just we are playing with messy play at a table and we can't see anything  
35 else but actually we might be learning how to, I don't know, make a den let's just say and  
36 actually "oh my goodness there is a spider and there is a fly and what tree is this – oh it's an  
37 oak tree, what do they have? They have acorns." So it's more open.

38 I – You have a real passion about this don't you?

39 R - Yeah I do (laughter). There is more opportunity to learn, more..... just from doing one  
40 task.

41 I - Lovely okay so with regards to playing and learning could you describe to me what you  
42 think is a quality indoor environment first of all?

43 R –I don't know if I can answer it because I've never been in an indoor environment and I can  
44 only go on what I see. I believe from the nurseries I looked around before I chose here, I  
45 think this indoor environment here is really good in regards to the different types of activities  
46 compared to some of the others I found. I would probably say if you are in an indoor  
47 environment there needs to be a good choice to engage. There probably needs to be natural  
48 products for kids to play with because they're not being outside. Maybe they've got  
49 pinecones, maybe they've got sea shells, maybe they've got natural things rather than just a  
50 pink electronic toy that replicates a laptop.

51 I - That can just be a laptop?

52 R - Yeah!

53 I - Okay brilliant, thank you. What do you think constitutes a quality outdoor environment?

54 R - Where children have got structure. They are learning but they are learning through doing.  
55 So rather than sitting round the table learning how to count and what numbers greater, what  
56 numbers smaller, actually let's counts some leaves, let's pile them up let's put four stones  
57 there and five leaves there and which one is greater? So but again they're not just learning  
58 about the numbers, they are learning about stones, the leaves. Maybe where they came from  
59 at the same time as learning about that.

60 I - Lovely and a quality natural environment?

61 R - The freedom. And actually feeling like they're free and not feeling confined. And they're  
62 not "you have to sit down around this table now and you have to do this now". Not being  
63 forced so having that freedom to actually.... some children wanna build a den, brilliant let's  
64 supervise you to do that. Some children want to lift up logs to see what bugs are under there.  
65 Some children want to make bow and arrows. You now it's just the freedom to do more and  
66 achieve more in my mind.

67 I - That's fine, lovely, thank you. Can you tell me how you think these different  
68 environments benefit speech and language development? So let's start with the natural  
69 environment. So how do you think that environment benefits speech and language?

70 R - I think because it's free but also taking it from my child, I guess from a very early age, I  
71 mean I was told by so many people that his speech was advanced but he knew animals, he  
72 could say it clearly, but we weren't just out and about, we would we would find things. We  
73 would talk them through. I would show him how it was said. Very quickly he could say it  
74 really clearly and I think that helps because rather than just "here's a picture of a squirrel....

75 here's a squirrel!" We can see it, you can touch it, it's exciting. So from anybody I think if  
76 it's exciting it engrosses the child in learning quicker than it does just with a book and I'm not  
77 saying that books aren't important because we read a lot but I think it's just that it's there, it's  
78 exciting. But actually if you're just outside it comes down again to do children feel freer to  
79 be able to try and say things, to be able to, "it doesn't matter if I get it wrong" but actually  
80 inside "is everyone looking at me?" Is everybody.... because as adults we feel that and  
81 children do probably more so I'd say. Yes so maybe somebody will laugh at me. Perhaps  
82 they don't think of it in that way but actually the reluctance to say something and get it  
83 wrong, that might be more in a confined environment.

84 I – Fantastic, thank you. So how do you think the indoors can benefit speech and language?

85 R - Again lots of different ways. There's lots they can still do. They can still bring things in.  
86 They can touch things, they can still feel things but in my opinion.... it's really hard for  
87 me...but for me that wouldn't be as beneficial in my opinion and that's why I've not chosen  
88 indoors.

89 I - And outdoor environment? somewhere in the middle of the two?

90 R - Yeah I think the same. Yes – I think it's good as well because in the outdoor  
91 environment, when you're in free open space you probably haven't got the other kinds of  
92 equipment so talking from this setting, in the outdoor classroom you've got lots of other  
93 different things. So they'll probably have dried starfish. Things like that which you wouldn't  
94 find if it was just outdoors because that's not a natural thing to be outdoors so there's  
95 probably.... you've got the open space but you've got the wider possibility of the wider  
96 learning I guess rather than just learning about what's there. You can bring things into that.

97 I - Yeah brilliant, thank you.

98 R - You never know whether you've explained yourself right or not.

99 I - It's perfect, absolutely perfect, thank you. What in your opinion then is a quality  
100 environment with regards to speech and language development?

101 R - Having the support.

102 I - Having the support from people?

103 R - Support from that, yeah from the early years team but also having other children around  
104 because children learn from children and actually having the right tools, the right equipment,  
105 so rather than "let's just sit round and learn something", "let's touch it, let's feel it, let's ...."  
106 Because I think, you know we learn by talking about descriptive words. Spiky or smooth or  
107 rough umm let's see what does that feel like because then when we're trying to describe  
108 things you picture that. You know if someone says rough to me then I am feeling sandpaper.  
109 So that sort of thing I would say.

110 I – Lovely, thank you. I think you might of just answered this ...what elements are essential  
111 to promote speech and language development?



112 R - said yeah we just done that yeah yeah to feel it so I know what it looks like yeah!

113 I - Okay so you're going to design the perfect environment to promote speech and language  
114 development. What are the three most important things for you to put in this environment?

115 R - Now I'm going to say a word. Please don't laugh but "stuff".

116 I - That's your starfish?

117 R - yeah! There needs to be things in there because the most important thing about speech  
118 and language for me is the....it's knowing what it is so if you're learning a word like starfish  
119 "what is a starfish? Where does a starfish live? What does the starfish do?" Yeah so by that  
120 I mean have the things there. Not just a picture of it. Obviously you can't have everything in  
121 the room, everything, everything, everything but you know just something to be able to learn  
122 from.

123 I - so we've got "stuff".....?

124 R - I think, I think the right staff is paramount because actually as a parent you need to leave  
125 your children, which is the most precious thing you have, in the care of somebody else so you  
126 need to be confident that they are delivering what you want them to deliver, in the way that  
127 you want them to and actually they have the best interest of your child at heart. So I think  
128 good staff is very key. Ummmmm (*some time here thinking*) I suppose, I suppose, I don't  
129 know whether it's a curriculum or not at this age, but what they're... to have those set goals  
130 of what children should be achieving by a certain point and having the staff that can work  
131 with those children to make sure that they get there because I think especially for preschool,  
132 children learn at different levels in different ways and no two child are ever the same but  
133 actually there needs to be a certain level that children need to get to before they get to school,  
134 so they don't just drown when they're at school. So I think having that in place and working  
135 towards that.

136 I - Fantastic, thank you. Last question, you'll be pleased to know! You know when you go  
137 to look at a house, you walk through the door and you say oh this just feels right. Or when  
138 you walked around the nursery. You said you went around quite a lot of nurseries. When  
139 you walked through the door here, it probably just felt right. Can you tell me what that  
140 feeling is for you?

141 R - The feeling of quality is, the staff straight away. They were very friendly and just the  
142 way the staff engaged with the children. You know, all the staff here straight away weren't  
143 asking closed questions. They were speaking to the children in the way I would speak to my  
144 son. So "what is that, what does that do" and I don't know what that would be called, that  
145 way of speaking but rather than kind of "oh you've got a lorry" it was oh you've  
146 got.....because in my mind my son might have a lorry but to him that might be a train  
147 because it's been a train on his train track so actually I don't ever say to him "oh, you've got a  
148 lorry" anymore. When he was younger I did because obviously he needed to learn what  
149 those things were but actually the open questioning and letting them make their own making  
150 decisions up that's one thing for me. The outside space was probably the biggest thing and

151 the fact that they have the outdoor classroom and that that go in the outdoor classroom. The  
152 fact that there are a few toys, like stimulating toys like Lego to build with but the rest is  
153 natural stuff. The fact that the Forest School element. They didn't shy away from letting  
154 children use tools but it was done in a supervised manner where they could learn to use them  
155 safely and the element of fire. Obviously we don't want a whole culture of arsonists or  
156 anything but actually learning what fire does, how it's made and actually what that could do,  
157 you know different qualities.

158 I – So, does it give you a feeling then. this quality? How would you describe that?

159 R - I just felt like I would be comfortable to leave my son here.

160 I – comfortable?

161 R - Yeah and I'd be confident in that. Before he came here he had been with a childminder  
162 when I first had to go back to work and my partner had that feeling and I didn't and it made  
163 me ill to the point of where I can't leave my son there any more.

164 I - So you had the converse of tha?

165 R – Yes – and then we found another childminder J and oh my goodness, she was brilliant.  
166 But she was outside with the children every day. Going to EC park, going to IC Park, so she  
167 was out, so that outsideness was always part of it but she was great and then obviously we  
168 brought him here and I was really nervous taking him from J, like to here but I knew that he  
169 needed to make that step but yeah as soon as I came here I was just like “he's going here”  
170 because to me it was the sort of things we engage with at home. The sorts of stuff I know  
171 that he enjoys and just the fact he has every day he's out in that garden. You know, the other  
172 day he came up to me when I came in, he said “mummy do you want an ice cream. We've  
173 made ice creams”. They were there pretending they'd got an ice cream parlour and just all of  
174 that for me. I'd much rather him be doing that outside than on a plastic ice cream parlour.  
175 I'm not decrying it, I know they can help children develop but for me it's the outsideness.

176 I - Fantastic

177 R - Does that answer it?

178 I - Yes! Yeah, brilliant, thank you so much.

1 **Phase One - Setting One - Practitioner Interview. (PA4, S1)**

2 Role – Room manager for indoor pre-school (between three and four year olds) Playworker  
3 in breakfast/after school/holiday club (up to 12 years old). Male practitioner.

4 I = interviewer

5 R = respondent

6

7 I - So first of all what I'm going to ask you to do is define for me what do you think an indoor  
8 classroom is. What is the definition of an indoor classroom?

9

10 R - The thing that strikes me is in four walls really, as an indoor classroom. I suppose the  
11 things that stand out in my mind for indoor classroom, would be kind of the paper, the books,  
12 the....I mean when you said, that's the first thing. I don't like... I don't like the fact that that's  
13 the first thing that popped in my head but obviously that's kind of obviously there can be  
14 anything within that indoor environment. I suppose.... it's harder than I thought this!  
15 (*laughter*) So what is an indoor classroom? (*big pause*)

16

17 I - explain it to an alien!

18

19 R - Yeah so it's a space where children are learning within environments sheltered from the  
20 elements really so where there tends to be a lot less natural light and more artificial light.  
21 The acoustics of the room are a lot more echoey and tend to be louder. I think the thing about  
22 in the classroom is there is a tendency for it to be more structured – a bit more zonal – if  
23 that's a word. Yeah. What's a classroom?

24

25 I - We can leave it there!

26 R – Yeah!

27 I - What about an outdoor classroom? An outdoor classroom as it's different from a Forest  
28 School?

29

30 R - okay so for an outdoor classroom it can correlate very similar but obviously it's more  
31 exposed to the elements so....

32

33 I - correlate with indoors?

34

35 R - Yeah so you can have the same resources and equipment outdoors but it tends to be...it's  
36 open to the elements. It's open too so you feel more of the cold, the heat, the rain, the sun,  
37 the snow, whatever it is. I think it tends to be... the places where I've worked and I've seen  
38 apart from here but previously it's a lot less structured and I think there's been a tendency for  
39 staff and professionals and parents to view it more of a space to run, where as that indoor  
40 classroom is a space to sit. Me personally I don't agree with that but I think when you look  
41 at the general consensus between what other professionals might think they'd view it as.....

42

43 I – Yeah, okay, lovely. Now natural environment then – define that for me.

44

45 R - I would say a natural environment would be one where there is very little human  
46 development of aspects. So you take an open space or a forest or something like that, where  
47 there has been very minimal interaction with anything in the sense of us trying to put our

48 stamp on it. So it might be that you've cleared the space of hazards or cut the grass down so  
 49 it's a bit more manageable but you haven't got as much resources that you're bringing into it  
 50 from an outside source. It's more like to you'll make do and mend attitude where you want to  
 51 do something so let's find out what can we can use and how we can find it to come to an end  
 52 rather than an indoor or outdoor classroom where it's kind of you look a lot about what can  
 53 we pull in. It's not looking at what we have already and what's around us. Which I think a  
 54 natural environment lends i self to.  
 55

56 I – Smashing, thank you. So thinking about those three areas now, can you tell me what you  
 57 think is a quality indoor environment, first of all?  
 58

59 R - I I think a quality indoor... I think on the top of my list is uncluttered. Uncluttered with  
 60 enough resources to capture a child's imagination, to engage them in their play but not too  
 61 much so as to overwhelm it. So it's that fine balance of what is just enough, which is  
 62 something I'm trying to experiment with at the minute. (*laughter*) Also it's, I think. Some....  
 63 along the lines of being uncluttered but it's kind of like, a space not on the floor, but like on  
 64 the walls and things like that. Somewhere where there's not too much. It's very neutral, I  
 65 think's the word. Not bright in your face, it's a very relaxing tones and colours and sounds, I  
 66 think with it being enclosed, you've got to think quite a lot about the acoustics of the room.  
 67 So it's when you're introducing a group of children in, you then don't have to fight over one  
 68 another to get your voice heard. You can still hear each other talking.  
 69

70 I - Now what's a quality outdoor environment?  
 71

72 R - I think it translates. Again the same it's you don't want..... you want to have enough  
 73 resources to capture the imagination but also you don't want it too bare as an outdoor space  
 74 just to promote that physical running, jumping, skills without not having those spaces to  
 75 really engage and to capture the imagination because a big part of the outdoor classroom is to  
 76 show whatever you do inside you can do outside as well. And because of that you want to  
 77 have opportunities to develop their mark making in whatever format that might take,  
 78 opportunities to develop their literacy, their maths skills and their early reasoning skills, and,  
 79 and things but....  
 80

81 I - Yeah that's fine. Thank you. And quality natural environment - what's that?  
 82

83 R - A quality natural environment? I think that's just..... I would love it to be like a very  
 84 varied, very.....I suppose that's with everything it should be varied...ha ha..... that's how my  
 85 brain works, I'm not very linear .....a very varied environment so if you're going to an open  
 86 space is it just grass or and and that for me is it quality. It has to be different plants, different  
 87 wildlife, different things to look, at different things to hear, different things just to engage  
 88 with. If it's the forest is it purely just trees or is there bushes, low-lying bushes? Is there  
 89 obstacles in the way? Is there things to capture the wildlife? Is there space for them to take  
 90 an adequate risk as well? So is there trees low enough, with branches for them to climb on?  
 91 Is there things for them to climb under? Is it ..... what was I going to say? Words have  
 92 gone!  
 93

94 I - That's fine. Okay that's absolutely brilliant thank you. So can you tell me then how you  
 95 think these environments help with children's speech and language development. So again  
 96 breaking it down into three areas ...or all over the place if you'd rather!  
 97

98 R - I think, especially with it being uncluttered....  
 99  
 100 I - Are we talking about indoors?  
 101  
 102 R – Yeah, indoors or outdoors but it's..... when it's, it's very busy and there's lots of  
 103 stimulation for the children, I tend to get the feeling that it doesn't, it hinders them a little bit.  
 104 I don't know why but it's like the more things they have it's like they're overstimulated. And  
 105 then it's that engagement goes for the children and then if you're ....especially acoustically....  
 106 I think that's where the outdoor classroom and natural environment tend to be better for  
 107 children's speech and language. When they talk there's nothing to bounce back, or very little  
 108 to bounce back so it's not as loud, not as difficult to hear others talking. Whereas if they're  
 109 indoors and you've got lots of things in the room where their voices are echoing and  
 110 reverberating around the room, it's then the volume of the room tends to get higher and higher  
 111 and it's then it impacts what the children are hearing, which then impacts what they're saying  
 112 and how therefore that language is then developing. I think with what they have to be  
 113 engaged with.... if they're not.... if the resources and the space and the environment in itself  
 114 isn't one when they can really focus in and engage on then that learning that they're having  
 115 and is taking place isn't going to be there. So on top of that then they're not going to be  
 116 exploring new ideas and trying to find out how to explore the new vocabulary that they're  
 117 learning and using in different ways. Then opportunities are going to be missed because that  
 118 engagement's not there so they are just going to be running round like headless chickens and  
 119 not actually thoughtfully using that language in a purposeful way, rather than just saying  
 120 words because they want to say words, or again trying to get their needs met.  
 121  
 122 I – Beautiful, thank you. So what in your opinion then is a quality environment with regards  
 123 to speech and language development per se? You've probably answered that already haven't  
 124 you?  
 125  
 126 R – Yeah! I think, for me, I think it's smaller spaces with not as many children.  
 127  
 128 I – What, indoors?  
 129  
 130 R - For indoors, yeah, for indoors mainly I think that one is. Because I worked for, before  
 131 here, a very, very big nursery and it was very open plan so you could see from one end to the  
 132 other and it was just, the sound travelled everywhere and thinking about it, just saying that, in  
 133 my mind it would lend itself and would've been better for them for an outdoor environment  
 134 because that's a very big open space but it tended to, I think because it was enclosed, there  
 135 was that difficulty in.... the sound management wasn't handled appropriately so there was  
 136 nothing to soak up. I think that opportunity to come down in a quiet environment with quiet  
 137 space and I think they like that feeling of being a bit enclosed in a space. To have that  
 138 conversation with but then also, quality in the sense of, is there things to fascinate them and  
 139 to really go "ooh what's that?" There's things constantly changing and things being brought  
 140 in so they going to be learning different vocabulary and they're then going to be become  
 141 more engaged and it's using that. That's a very big benefit of being outdoors... is that there's  
 142 so much to see, to hear, to look at, to touch, just to feel, to mould and manipulate that actually  
 143 the quality of the access to new language is so much more so and..... It might be what, in our  
 144 minds, we constitute having been in a natural environment, it's like den building and making  
 145 things and like..... A lot of it revolves around that team spirit. About being with others,  
 146 needing others help and when you're going out, especially like to a Forest School, where

147 you're going out as a group, you are then being "well we are the group, going to this space.  
 148 What can we do together?" And it's not ..... it like gives them a sense of community feeling.  
 149  
 150 I - Yeah and you think that engages more speech and language?  
 151  
 152 R - I would have said so, yes, because it's them....because they definitely feel part of a  
 153 group. You want to... if something is puzzling you or you're trying to find something out or  
 154 you want to do something, you want to involve the person to your left on your right. And if  
 155 it's.... you're in a space where you're feeling .....  
 156  
 157 I - Is that different from when you're indoors?  
 158  
 159 R - Oh I'm not sure now.....  
 160  
 161 I - It might not be then it might not be the same when you're indoors. That's a really  
 162 interesting thought. So you're going to design a perfect environment to promote speech and  
 163 language development. What three things are going to be the most important to you within  
 164 this environment?  
 165  
 166 R- I think spaces. To kind of ....to go off, to be with a group but away from the larger groups  
 167 so they can have chance to converse freely amongst each other and not feel like they're not  
 168 being listened in on. I think lots of objects to provoke, to provoke an interest, to provoke a  
 169 conversation. Whether that be the natural resources that you find. Whether that be wacky  
 170 objects that have been made rather than .....what else? (*big pause*) How do you design a  
 171 room with acoustics?  
 172  
 173 I - Oh yes! That's really important to you. You've mentioned that lots.  
 174  
 175 R - It's difficult because it's like.... I'm not a sound engineer but it's difficult to do but the  
 176 reason why it keeps on coming to my head is ....you like walk into space and you can be hit  
 177 by a wall of sound, that feeling and in your head you can't even hear yourself think, as the  
 178 term goes. So if that's what it's like for an adult, with very well developed communicative  
 179 skills and some language, for a child who is only young and developing that.... how are they  
 180 going to.... if we can't hear ourselves think and struggle to really struggle, if I had to really  
 181 concentrate to listen to somebody. What is it going to be like for them? I think that's why....  
 182 that's like the thing I'm holding onto.  
 183  
 184 I - Yes that's absolutely fine. Yes - you can't name it necessarily but that acoustic  
 185 ...balance?  
 186  
 187 R - Yes. So as you walk in, you're not hit by that wall of sound, as such.  
 188  
 189 I - Yes. Ok. Last question, you'll be pleased to know. You know when you go and look  
 190 round houses. For example, if you move home, you walk through the door and you just say  
 191 this this house just feels right. Parents say it when they walk round nurseries don't they?  
 192 They say "I've been to look around loads of nurseries and this one just feels right". What  
 193 does that quality environment feel like to you? How does that make you feel?  
 194  
 195 R - It makes me feel relaxed. When I look around a nursery or space, it's ....I often look at  
 196 what the children do and it's..... are they very engaged? Not quiet but ....You know when

197 you see a group of children playing and they're just there? And they're talking amongst each  
 198 other and it might be that they're going to get things or do things but it's all very purposeful  
 199 and you can kind of tell that even .....it might be very calm, and even if it might be very busy  
 200 and active and doing things.... their play and that mental state they're in....the engagement  
 201 state again but that mental..... I forgot the point.... the reason, the words I said.....but just  
 202 that state of calmness in their mind. I think.  
 203  
 204 I - Do you get that feeling yourself? That calmness in your mind if you go into somewhere  
 205 that feels right?  
 206  
 207 R - Yes. It's like you walk in and it's like "ooohhhh yes" and you can see that all that the  
 208 resources that they have they are well used. Not messy and not messy.... in the sense of....  
 209  
 210 I - Trashed???  
 211  
 212 R - Yes - trashed, yes. I think that's the best term!  
 213  
 214 I - Academic term that!!!  
 215  
 216 R - Yeah (*laughter*) yeah, yes it's everything that has been used but respectfully used, in a  
 217 sense, with a purpose and you can see that spaces have got defined reasons.....but actually do  
 218 they need definement because in a natural environment wouldn't have any of that .....  
 219  
 220 I - you're tying yourself in knots again (*laughter*)  
 221  
 222 R - But so it's just a comment you said about children in a natural environment being able to  
 223 speak a lot more, makes me think, well what is it about that? That's the thought process set in  
 224 my head when I'm thinking about an indoor environment and outdoor environment. So  
 225 maybe that is one of the detrimental factors that ....we kind of try to pigeon hole spaces for  
 226 different learning experiences but is that inhibiting what they communicate because you're  
 227 already giving them all the options for like an activity there? So that they talk amongst  
 228 themselves and the reasoning and problem solving isn't..... it's lessened because actually  
 229 they don't need to problem solve as much because actually "I've got that there".....  
 230  
 231 I - On that note are you happy to leave that there?  
 232  
 233 R - Yes  
 234  
 235 I - Thank you so much. Thank you.  
 236  
 237

1  
2 **Phase One - Setting One - Parent Interview. (PA5, S1)**  
3 Role – Mother of a 3 year old child (daughter) in pre-school. She attends the forest school  
4 and the outdoor class.  
5 I = interviewer  
6 R = respondent  
7  
8  
9 I - First of all, what I'm going to ask you to do is, can you define for me what you think an  
10 indoor classroom is? Just give me, kind of, if I was an alien for example, and didn't know  
11 what it was.  
12  
13 R - Learning inside four walls basically. In a room. That's what I would differentiate for an  
14 indoor classroom. So four walls, in one room. That's what I would say – yeah.  
15  
16 I - And outdoor classroom? And here I'm making a differentiation between outdoor  
17 classroom and forest school. So outdoor classroom first?  
18  
19 R – The outdoor class would be more of an open space that's what I'd say now cos outdoor  
20 you haven't got the confined four walls but still you're confined to an area maybe, with fresh  
21 air.  
22  
23 I – Yes. What would you expect to find in there?  
24  
25 R - Besides the weather conditions? Umm probably a over, sort of.....like a canopy just to  
26 cover. With open sides and probably more natural resources as you would find in an outside  
27 environment and outside classroom. So not so many tables and chairs maybe. Yeah.  
28  
29 I – Yeah. More space?  
30  
31 R – More space, yeah. Definitely.  
32  
33 I – Okay, lovely. What about the forest school environment, the natural environment?  
34  
35 R – Probably the same lines along the outside room but obviously you have the options to go  
36 out to an open forest, inverted commas, and work and probably learn in a natural, with very  
37 natural resources. Rather than a pen and paper and the things that you buy from a shop  
38 *(laughter)* I think it's just their body, more imagination in a forest school I think if used. I put  
39 it back to cavemen to be honest, how they probably used to live, before we became very 20th  
40 century.  
41  
42 I – Lovely, thank you. So can you tell me then what you think is a quality indoor  
43 environment?  
44



45 R – People. People. Nice, down-to-earth people. Understanding staff. The ambiance and  
 46 making that....umm good energy. That’s what I focus on. So it’s like buying a house. If you  
 47 like it you going to buy it. So that’s what I would say the quality for me.  
 48  
 49 I – So, that’s more of a feeling.  
 50  
 51 R - A feeling of how everyone is. So it could be the décor, the staff, maybe the children  
 52 when you visit. You know. How they are responding and yeah. So ummm.. and hopefully  
 53 a calm one. (*laughter*) umm in that respect but yes – it’s that ambiance, yeah ambiance I’d  
 54 say yeah.  
 55  
 56 I – Definitely. Lovely. What about a quality outdoor environment?  
 57 R - Probably the same as in quality of staff et cetera et cetera like the indoor one but the  
 58 difference being, you have got the quality of the fresh air which actually keeps you awake.  
 59 You’ll never be bored, I think, in an outdoor classroom because you’re going to have those  
 60 ....every day it’s going to be different. So I think for me, as in quality, learning is going to be  
 61 more interesting because an indoor classroom you’re still faced with the same environment  
 62 every day whereas an outdoor classroom you’re have got those extra um.... icing on the cake  
 63 so to speak. Yeah.  
 64  
 65 I - Or the ice on the puddle?!

66  
 67 R – Yeah exactly! Yeah!

68  
 69 I - And a natural environment?

70  
 71 R - Natural environment? Well even more so. Even more open space. Even more prone to  
 72 weather conditions and the learning from that as well and the quality of how safe one can be  
 73 in an outdoor environment without entering danger zones. Does that make sense?

74  
 75 I - Controlled risk?

76  
 77 R – Yes, controlled risk of what could happen, what you could learn, but still you can learn in  
 78 a controlled way.

79  
 80 I - so is it alright to have risk?

81  
 82 R - Yeah I think so because sometimes indoors it will be a lot safer you know yeah but it’s  
 83 okay to be safe outside too. Yeah. So which I think is great for kids to get involved in, to be  
 84 honest. It gives them that “oh I can do this” type thing. Yeah. I think so.

85  
 86 I - Have you seen that with your child?

87  
 88 R - Oh yeah. I’ve seen that with my child. She is an outside kid to be honest. Yeah, my  
 89 husband is from New Zealand so, out over there everyone is outside. The kids play outside  
 90 and what they have is that kind of thing. You notice the difference that they feel safer even  
 91 though they’re outside all the time. It’s a safer environment.

92  
 93 I - So he’s bought that over?

94

95 R – Yes he's bought that and he's emphasised that and we've put that in her so we're always  
 96 out and about, so of course, hence why she is in an outside classroom because I think we  
 97 thought that was best for her. When we have seen a lot of difference since she started. She is  
 98 sociable, she's more sociable because of that reason, so yeah...

99

100 I – Yeas. So how do you think that these different environments help speech and language  
 101 development? So pick which ever one you want to. Shall we do the natural environment first  
 102 because that's your passion obviously?

103

104 R - I know. Oh yeah!

105

106 I – So, how do you think that helps speech and language?

107

108 R - Oh I don't know. Just expressions. How they're feeling. They're more inclined to say.  
 109 To tell you. They're not likely to shy away in that sort of environment. If they're coming  
 110 across different people they are going to have to sort of say something so it's more inclined to  
 111 .... They'll pick up speech and get themselves out of a situation whether it's good or bad, in a  
 112 more natural outside environment. Yeah - I think it's more sociable outside. I put that in  
 113 when kids go out and play at playtimes and being from inside to outside. Their, their.... Um  
 114 they channel their energy into playing and you'd be surprised how many children actually  
 115 don't shy away in an outside environment and they play with their friends. But as soon as  
 116 they hit a classroom they, some go into like invertedness character. So I think being outside  
 117 there's no change of character so I think speech really elaborates there I think. I think so.

118

119 I – Brilliant. So that space, being confined to a space you think confines the speech and  
 120 language?

121

122 R – Yeah. I think so. I think cos, when you're outside, you're more open to make more  
 123 people, see more things. Maybe be more inquisitive so you're more likely to... a child is more  
 124 likely to point and learn to say "what is that?" rather than in the classroom it's the same.  
 125 So the furniture might be the same every day. So they're getting a bit lazy and I think that's  
 126 what, I think personally anyway, yeah. So yeah. That's my opinion anyway. *(laughter)*

127

128 I - That's absolutely fine. That's what I'm after. So, can you tell me, do you think being  
 129 indoors can help speech and language though?

130

131 R - It does to a certain degree. Like if you're learning from a book and stuff and reading. I  
 132 think, and that warmth and.... I think it does help. It does help. On a more one-to-one, it  
 133 helps more I think. Err, smaller groups I think it helps even more. I think big group, I think,  
 134 in the inside environment can be..... get lost I think yeah. So that's when, I think of different  
 135 characters like shyness or those children who are willing to sit at the front, can really need  
 136 that support.

137

138 I – The ones that shy away?

139

140 R – Yes.

141

142 I - So what about that outdoor classroom? Where does that fit in between those two? How  
 143 can it help with speech and language?

144

145 R - I think it helps just as much as what it does on the outside environment as in the open  
 146 space of going to the forest, but it does sort of teach them that there is confinement; an area,  
 147 so when they go into higher education they know they have to stay in one area, or one  
 148 classroom or one.....they haven't got that freedom to sort of "Oh ok, I'm going to wander  
 149 down the corridor" you know, so I think it's good to a certain degree. It still has the same  
 150 things as an open one but they have to sort of abide by a rule or two so and stuff yeah  
 151 definitely.  
 152  
 153 I – Boundaries?  
 154  
 155 R – Yeah, boundaries, definitely that's the difference. But I think speech is just as good as  
 156 the forest, I think.  
 157  
 158 I – Fantastic, thank you. So what do you think then in your opinion is a quality environment  
 159 with regards to speech and language development?  
 160  
 161 R - Probably be in feeling that whatever they say it's not a mistake. So you know, you're free  
 162 to say. They're not wrong. Maybe at the younger ages when they're learning to speak,  
 163 obviously, and are just corrected if they're not saying a particular letter but in a very fun way.  
 164 Oh you know. So they'll pick up eventually what needs to be said and I think that's  
 165 important. You know, maybe more in a one-to-one basis so if one person says something,  
 166 one child says something. You can pick that up quickly. Knock it on the head and say "this  
 167 is how you say it" and then speech just develops and now carry on playing. So especially if  
 168 it's free flow and they're doing what they learn. Every child has a say and I think that  
 169 develops speech because they're engaging in their own activity. I think that's the best quality.  
 170  
 171 I – Lovely. So if you are going to make the best possible environment, if you were going to  
 172 design the perfect environment to promote speech and language development, what three  
 173 things would you put in there  
 174  
 175 R - Oh okay! Oh dear! I'd put.....definitely an outside with a option of a small indoor play,  
 176 more of a barn with open doors, so that's what I'd have and everything else would be natural.  
 177 So they would just do what they want in their interest. Does that make sense?  
 178  
 179 I - So I'm outside, with a barn and natural resources.....  
 180  
 181 R – Um, and, I would say books, lots of books with the option they can just go to them  
 182 whenever they want and then, so it's easy learning. Yeah. So a book and singing corner.  
 183 Yeah, a book and singing corner - that's what I'd have.  
 184  
 185 I – Lovely. Yeah. Okay last question you'll be pleased to know. So you've talked about this  
 186 already actually. About how the kind of environment has an ambiance and a feel about it.  
 187 Like when you go to look round the new home. If you go into that kind of environment,  
 188 where it feels right, how does that make you feel? What does it feel like? If you could  
 189 explain that feeling.  
 190  
 191 R - Just warm, Just nice, warm, cosy. As if you're having a hot chocolate with your feet up.  
 192 That's what I think. I think probably no stress that's what it is. No stress in the environment.  
 193 Just stress free.  
 194

195 I – Yeah - that's a gorgeous analogy - as if you're having a hot chocolate!  
196  
197 R – Yeah. Just that cosiness. I think it's important for kids to feel that when they go and for  
198 us to walk through the gates or whatever, because it can be quite daunting. Yeah. So I think  
199 you've got to make the right decision for where they need to be. Yeah definitely. I think so –  
200 yeah.  
201  
202 I - Thank you very, very much. Thank you  
203  
204

- 1 **Phase One - Setting One - Practitioner Interview. (PA6, S1)**
- 2 Role – Overall pre-school manager (3 and 4 year olds). Manages indoor and outdoor
- 3 classrooms and yurt. Key person. Behaviour management officer. Female practitioner.
- 4 I = interviewer
- 5 R = respondent
- 6 I - So the first thing I'm going to ask you to do then, is define for me what you think an
- 7 indoor classroom is, an outdoor classroom and a natural environment. So talk to me like I
- 8 know nothing about it whatsoever. What would you say an indoor classroom is?
- 9 R - So to me an indoor classroom would be somewhere homely, welcoming, warm, friendly.
- 10 I - What are the defining features of it?
- 11 R - Like areas? Areas do you mean? Like areas of development?
- 12 I – So, if I knew nothing about what an indoor classroom was, how would I know that what
- 13 I'm in isn't a... I don't know .....a Tesco's coffee shop and is an indoor classroom?
- 14 R – Right – yes. So we would have an eating area, a role-play area. I'm going by our room,
- 15 so it's quite easy. So we have like an investigation area and then we have a writing/mark
- 16 making area. So I'm just thinking about what I've got in my room.
- 17 I – Yes. That's absolutely fine. So what then is an outdoor classroom?
- 18 R – Oh wide open space I think. No walls. Definitely no walls.
- 19 I – I've differentiated between outdoor classroom and Forest School here so we are doing
- 20 outdoor classroom first. So wide open space, no walls.....
- 21 R - Ooooh I'm trying to think of those area's.
- 22 I – Are the indoor areas and outdoor areas the same then?
- 23 R – Yeah. Yeah. We do have the same sort of areas so she has a kitchen but it's a mud
- 24 kitchen area. They have an art area and then they have....
- 25 I - The mud kitchen is in the outdoor classroom?
- 26 R – Yeah, yeah it's defined as a mud kitchen. They have an art area and then they have a
- 27 table in the middle which they use for eating or any other activities.
- 28 I - Okay so it's planned activities out there?
- 29 R - Planned activities, yes. As well. Like planned activities inside as well.
- 30 I - Lovely and then tell me about the natural environment.

31 R - So the Forest School, which is something which is really new to me because I've only  
 32 been a couple of times. So I went last week actually. So there's no, no boundaries. Not no  
 33 boundaries but there is a freedom. As soon as you walk into the park you can feel the  
 34 freedom. Even as an adult you feel the freedom because there is nothing restricting you.  
 35 There's a lot of sensory things, lots of different colours especially this time of year, lots of  
 36 colours, lots of noises, lots of yeah.... lots of visual things, lots of sounds.

37 R - Any resources?

38 I - It's all natural resources isn't it? Wood, leaves, trees, logs, mud.... whatever is there.

39 R - Lovely, okay thank you. so can you tell me then what you feel constitutes a quality  
 40 indoor environment. So I think you started doing this with your warm, friendly.....what else  
 41 makes a quality indoor environment with regards to playing and learning?

42 I - Full of resources. Inviting resources. Lots of nice provocations to get the children talking,  
 43 get them excited.

44 R - What about the outdoor environment?

45 I - That would be exactly the same. Lots of..... in the outdoor classroom they have a lot  
 46 more of a natural take on .....like we can have cars and dolls in our room but outside they  
 47 would have, they would probably make a wooden baby or wooden cars. They do their own  
 48 twist on what we do inside.

49 I - Lovely. So what makes a quality natural environment?

50 R - So in the forest school? Again lots of resources but unlimited resources really I would  
 51 say. The weather as well because that can hinder their experience or enhance their  
 52 experience depending on what it was. I'm just thinking about my experiences going in the  
 53 rain (*laughter*)

54 I - Not so much fun in the rain? What did the children think?

55 R - Oh, the children. It's the best time to take them when it's muddy because they do like  
 56 mudslides and they have their own. They've made their own like area in there, in the W park  
 57 area that has got like this hill and they've slid down it so much it's just like they've made it.  
 58 They wouldn't know now but that's there. If they are going to do mud sliding that is that bit  
 59 that they go to. Well they actually have two. They have one that's quite small so obviously  
 60 for the new children that are going and then they have a much more advanced slope.

61 I - It's like skiing! You don't partake in the mud slide then?!

62 R - No I have a bad back so I can't do it. I can walk up and down the hills. When we went  
 63 last, I've been two times. So the first week we went, the children were really.....they don't  
 64 normally go so A will take groups of children from..... not just the children that are based  
 65 outside - they go up all the time but it's just to get everybody to have an experience of going  
 66 there. So we took the new children and they were really really nervous and anxious about  
 67 going up these hills but by the second time they went they were like off. It was brilliant and  
 68 nice to see that they got that confidence and yes they do change when they go there.

69 I - Yeah it's amazing really isn't it?

70 R – Yeah. It's a lovely.....I think it's such a new practices - the forest school. They never  
71 had anything like that when I first went into childcare.

72 I - Although when we were children I suppose we just did it anyway didn't we? That's what  
73 we. They don't get the opportunity now do they? We have to manufacture a school to do it.

74 R - It's quite sad really isn't it that they don't have that freedom as children, to just go off.  
75 There's lots of risks now but there's still risks at forest school because they have to do so  
76 many risk assessments and yeah.....

77 I - Anyway tell me what you think or how you think these different environments can benefit  
78 speech and language development? So how do you think an indoor environment can benefit  
79 speech and language development?

80 R - So we have lots of visual prompts inside. Like lots of provocations to get the children  
81 talking. We have a lot of very chatty staff who like to engage children and support them with  
82 their speech and language. We do a lot of....we have a whiteboard we play word association  
83 games on and story CDs, lots of books. And the role play area, it's not just a home corner or  
84 a baker's it's just a role-play area for them to make it whatever they want to be. Which I  
85 think gives them the freedom to expand on their speech and .....

86 I - Yeah lovely. What about the outdoor environment? How can that benefit speech and  
87 language development?

88 R - For N's classroom it would be the same as what I said for the indoors but they would  
89 .....where our language would be using more natural words about like, nature and weather  
90 because they're out in it and they can see that so, yeah, visual. They've got visual things, like  
91 more sensory to help them develop their language.

92 I - And then the natural environment? The forest school? How can that benefit speech and  
93 language development?

94 R – Wow. Probably a little bit like N's (outside classroom) so they've got the sensory and...  
95 and they're just there and they just get stuck in don't they?

96 I - You talked about their confidence earlier. Do you think that has something to do with  
97 speech and language?

98 R - Yeah possibly. Yeah cos they probably feel they've got the freedom to..... because they  
99 don't have any natural boundaries, they're probably more relaxed and they are more open so  
100 they can.....And it's smaller groups as well so their voices get heard a lot better whereas  
101 possibly in the inside environment it can be quite noisy. Yeah, I'm thinking now. Some  
102 children are very quiet and you can't hear them. You have to really, really get down to their  
103 level and listen really....well I do. Listen really hard to what they're saying.

104 I - When you're inside?

105 R – Yeah.

106 I – Do they change out in the forest school?

107 R – Well yeah. Because they're in a smaller group. There is no background noise. You can  
108 just hear nature. You can just hear the birds tweeting.

109 I - So what in your opinion then is a quality environment with regards to speech and language  
110 development? Overall?

111 R – Overall! So lots of visual prompts. I keep using the word provocations but just things to  
112 spark their imagination. Adults role modelling and talking to them, conversing with them  
113 and giving them the time to answer you as well. Not.... not giving them the answers but  
114 researching with them.

115 I - Okay so you're going to design the perfect environment to promote speech and language  
116 development. What are you going to be the three most important elements for you?

117 R - I'm just trying to think.... umm lots of sensory things. So it could be sight, touch, even  
118 smells. Things that the children are interested in. Not what I think they want. I would  
119 potentially I'd ask them what.... "what do you want in nursery?" I heard you asking them  
120 that this morning. That's two! What did I say?

121 I - Lots of sensory things. Things that children are interested in....

122 R - I can't think of anything else. I could probably think about it tonight - I can't think of  
123 anything else.

124 I - Well provocations has cropped up quite a lot....it's not just something that they're  
125 interested then you've got introduce new stuff as well. I don't want to put words into your  
126 mouth but ....

127 R – Yeah, yeah of course. Yeah you can have things that they're interested in to start  
128 conversations and then you can have new things to get them questioning and to promote  
129 more speech and language.

130 I – Fantastic. So the last question, you'll be pleased to know, what does the quality  
131 environment feel like to you? So you know when you go and look around a house, if you're  
132 going to move, your walk through the door and people say it just felt right and parents often  
133 say that when they walk round nurseries don't they? "I have a looked round six nurseries  
134 before this and this one just feels right" What does that feel like to you?

135 R – Home. Home. When I came for my interview here and I walked around I knew straight  
136 away that I wanted to be here and I'd be so upset if I didn't and I have worked in lots of  
137 different nurseries and I just got a warm fuzzy feeling. It was just a nice vibe and everybody  
138 was happy. The children were engaged and they were friendly. They came up to me and I  
139 was a stranger. They didn't know who I was and they were....they had the confidence to do  
140 that.

141 I - Yeah lovely. Okay thank you very, very much. Thank you.

142



1 **Phase One - Setting One - Parent Interview. (PA7, S1)**

2 Role – Father of a 3 year old child (son) in pre-school. He attends the outdoor class and has  
3 been at this setting for 7 months.

4 I = interviewer

5 R = respondent

6

7 I - So the first thing I'm going to ask you is how would you define the following  
8 environments. Okay so indoor classroom, outdoor classroom and natural environment, being  
9 sort of forest school. So first of all indoor classroom?

10 R – Are you asking in this place or in general?

11 I - In general. So what's your kind of take, if you like, on it. So if I said your son was going  
12 to be in an indoor classroom what would you think he was going to play in?

13 R – Okay. When I think of an indoor classroom, I suppose it's what I think of really, stuff  
14 that you would do at home. You know, really, the sort of the toys which you have at home.  
15 Um, you know roleplay activities really and I think of like, a little bit like, not quite soft play  
16 but the sorts of soft toys, the cushions, the sort of the stuff like that.

17 I – Like soft furnishings?

18 R - Yeah that sort of thing. Yeah the soft furnishings and when I think of indoor I think of  
19 more drawing you know and scribbling and perhaps painting and things like that. Not so  
20 much learning words and phrases but doing that more academic side of things. Yeah. You  
21 know so obviously depends on the age of the children. I don't expect them to be doing  
22 anything too strong so that's what I think of when I think of the indoor stuff.

23 I – Lovely. What do you think of the outdoor classroom?

24 R – Outdoor?

25 I - Defined differently from natural, forest school.

26 R – Okay, so Forest School separate. So outdoor stuff. Ok. My impressions of coming here  
27 was that the sort of.... like you are playing in the garden at home really. Like football or  
28 little ball games. Things like that really. And maybe I think..... I'm using what I did when I  
29 was a child.....so action figure or whatever so playing outside and making and digging holes  
30 for no reason at all and then making bigger holes and stuff like that really so yeah.....

31 I - Okay that's fine and then the Forest School?

32 R - The forest school I think of as slightly different and again, I'm a little bit new to this or  
33 the concept because I've never thought of it before I must admit. But certainly the name  
34 implies out with nature a bit more rather than in your garden and that's sort of why I  
35 differentiate. And I think more growing things and the nature or the implied nature  
36 association really. So less....it's not so much less play but different types of play. So more  
37 climbing trees and perhaps doing a little bit of the elementary sort of stage of growing things.

38 So simple seeds. Growing small flowers and things like that and not necessarily  
 39 understanding the concept of it, other than your put your seed in the garden, in the ground  
 40 and then a few weeks later your sunflower comes up but yes sort of I think of it as more of  
 41 a....that sort of nurturing or nature nurture sort of going hand-in-hand really. Of like seeing  
 42 how things are in the woods. Like going for a walk. Yes that's what I think of as forest  
 43 school. Going for a walk in the woods rather than just sitting and playing in your garden at  
 44 home.

45 I - Yeah lovely. Thank you. So with regards to playing and learning, from the children's  
 46 perspective, can you tell me what you think would be a quality indoor environment? What  
 47 makes an indoor environment a quality indoor environment for children?

48 R - So I think in principle all three will have the same principles behind them. Thinking of  
 49 what children like to do, you know, it's lots of.... lots of different types of activities and this  
 50 room I think is quite a good example. You've got different areas to children's likes and  
 51 dislikes or what they gravitate towards rather, because they like everything at this stage. You  
 52 know, like you've got the pots and pans indoors and again I would consider that to be an  
 53 indoor activity, although I have seen that it's not necessarily limited to indoors but again the  
 54 sort of thing you see in the home. For example my son has a small plastic Fisher-Price  
 55 kitchen and it's got cups and saucers and things like that and you know making food and  
 56 cooking food and things like that so, so lots of different hands-on stuff. And the soft side of  
 57 things really.

58 I - is this for inside?

59 R - Yes, inside. I think, like I said, it's all principally very similar but more the softer  
 60 plastics, the softer stuff that's not going to really injure, or potentially injure children.

61 I - Safe?

62 R - Yeah, yeah that's what I think indoor play stuff is this safe, soft, softer stuff. That's not to  
 63 say you can't jump off the sofa and hurt yourself or that sort of thing really. But varying type  
 64 of activities and lots of different textures and things like that really. Um outdoors - I think  
 65 very similar but more hard so whereas you might have more plastic stuff inside...you might  
 66 have the metal stuff outside and making and banging drums, making noises and things like  
 67 that. Although you can do that inside as well

68 I - But that's what you perceive to be a quality environment?

69 R - Yeah I think so. As with all these really, a quality environment is one that's going to  
 70 stimulate the child both mentally, and make them want to do things isn't it? Make them want  
 71 to express themselves and however sensible means that is really, so you don't want to.... you  
 72 don't want to sort of particularly sort of pigeonhole a child as to what to play with inside or  
 73 outside. Other than what is health and safety and sensibly appropriate, you know really. So  
 74 you're giving them a lot of variation in opportunities to play with things. So they decide  
 75 themselves what they want to.... so if you give them lots of opportunities, not an exhaustive  
 76 amount but enough so they can decide for themselves rather than you telling them what to  
 77 do.... to do with this.

78 I - Yes. So going back to your Forest School and walking in the woods what would make  
 79 that a high quality walk in the woods. So that natural kind of environment?

80 R - Yeah high-quality. Yeah okay. I think it should be....you certainly need a  
81 knowledgeable supervisor. Somebody who can talk a little bit, you know, talk  
82 knowledgeably about the different..... not to a high level but just somebody who can say the  
83 difference between different leaves and different trees and flowers and things. Somebody  
84 who knows the safety side of things. Not picking certain flowers.....

85 I – Or mushrooms!

86 R - Exactly mushrooms yeah exactly. Somebody quality because you're walking in the  
87 woods or outside yourself it's not so much what you bring it's choosing the location that is  
88 appropriate I think. I think that allows the children, again, to explore and see these things in  
89 a environment that is identified as going to be the most stimulating for them. Now I'm  
90 thinking now, a bit extreme of course but if you go to a desert environment where there is  
91 very little to....you know that's not going to stimulate a child as much as going into a,  
92 perhaps, a wooded environment where there is lots of different things and lots of bugs to see  
93 and things like that really. So it's that sort of quality part I think is the decision on where to  
94 actually base your outdoor activities.

95 I – Fantastic. Thank you. So how do you think these different environments can benefit  
96 speech and language development? So again we're looking at the three areas. How can  
97 indoors help children's speech and language?

98 R – Okay. Indoors I think you can..... you can do more towards.... you can have children  
99 sitting down reading..... reading to children you know.... and you can even do the indoor  
100 play as part of speech development is concerned. Again it's encouraging children to sort of  
101 talk amongst themselves but obviously talking from an adult, talking to a child so they can  
102 hear the different words. So I think, yeah in an indoor environment, I would say speech,  
103 language or even word development you know.....it's the drawing of....making up the letters  
104 themselves, getting the children to pronounce them. You know, things like that you can do  
105 indoor activities but they're more drawing based or that sort of supervisor to child sort of  
106 activities I think. Because children can't read they can't really go off and do too many things  
107 on their own, I don't think, I think it should be or I would expect it to be more adult led.

108 I – Ok. Lovely. What about the outdoor environment with regards to speech and language?

109 R - Again I think the outdoor games that you can play, you know, and I've seen some of the  
110 staff doing some of the things. For example yesterday they were playing what's the time Mr  
111 Wolf. Okay and at the end of it, when I came and picked up my son he was talking about  
112 wolf. The wolf! Which was one of the supervisors, one of the staff, and so you know it's not  
113 a normal used conversational word, wolf, is it really? So he learned that word from them,  
114 from them talking about it and again it still sort of adult led I think really, but it's the physical  
115 side, the running around, the hiding, the climbing and things. You know that sort of stuff but  
116 it's really almost the conversational, the adult led part, but whether you do it in a more  
117 theoretical version inside and a more practical version outside

118 I – Yes. Lovely. Last but not least then that natural environment again. How can that  
119 benefit speech and language development?

120 R - I suppose in extension from the outdoor type really. If you're going for the more natural  
121 than you're explaining things to the children about the natural environment. I think so I still

122 think it will be adult led or supervisor led but again it's more the context of what you're  
 123 talking about and I'm not thinking about the huge great big Latin names for flowers. I'm  
 124 thinking of the simple, you know, daisy and dandelion and yellow flower and things like that.  
 125 You know, really.

126 I - Okay lovely. What, in your opinion, then is a quality environment with regards to speech  
 127 and language development, overall?

128 R - I think a quality environment would be an environment where the staff are very, very  
 129 hands on, you know, and have a very good relationship, a good interactive relationship with  
 130 the children, really. I think that's probably the most important. You know, if you've got the  
 131 right member of staff I think that will always facilitate.... I think that works education as a  
 132 whole really. They are sort that motivate the children and if you don't have that sort of  
 133 person I think it impedes it quite a bit, or it can do.

134 I - Fantastic. Thank you. So you're going to design the perfect environment to promote  
 135 speech and language development. What are the three most important things for you in that  
 136 environment?

137 R - Okay. Number one is what I've always said. A quality member of staff or a high calibre  
 138 member of staff, really. Two, I think, an environment which is varying and stimulating for  
 139 children. Something they will naturally find that they want to touch and play with more and  
 140 again ask the staff about "Why is this doing this?" and "why is that doing that?" So that's  
 141 number two; staff, environment.... and the third point.... that's a tricky one that.....trying to  
 142 find a third point. The first two I can certainly say.....(*big pause*)

143 I - You talked about risk. How do you feel about that?

144 R - Well when it comes to risk actually I'm all for a little bit of risk. I think that's good.  
 145 And, yeah, I suppose that's good..... that's a good one..... yeah it's an environment which  
 146 allows children to sort of stretch themselves but without breaking themselves (laughter). So  
 147 allowing some risk I think is good, you know, but obviously yes, as long as it's controlled or is  
 148 managed effectively, I think.

149 I - Is that your third thing?

150 R - Yes, I suppose so, yes!

151 I - Last question then, you'll be pleased to know! When people go to look round houses,  
 152 they walk through the door and say "this house just feels right". People say that about  
 153 nurseries. They'll say "I've been around six nurseries already but when I walked through the  
 154 door here, this just felt right". What does that quality environment feel like to you? When  
 155 you walk through that door how does it make you feel?

156 R - I think it's... it sets you at ease. I think you feel relaxed straightaway. You feel happy  
 157 that, you know, that the staff are upbeat and I do know, at a previous one I've been to.....  
 158 yeah.... you know the difference when the staff are just going through the motions rather than  
 159 actually having a genuine sort of warm. sort of interest in what they're doing so so..... yeah  
 160 my feeling is it's a general upbeat feeling, the happy, the warmth. A positive approach. A  
 161 genuinely caring feeling from everybody, really, you know, all the way through. Yeah.  
 162 Yeah.

1 **Phase One - Setting Two – Practitioner Interview (PA1, S2)**

2 Role – Nursery practitioner. Started as a kitchen assistant two years ago and then became a

3 nursery practitioner about a year ago. This setting was first time worked in early years.

4 Female.

5

6 I = interviewer

7 R = respondent

8

9

10 I - So what I'm going to ask you first of all, is if you could define for me what you think an

11 indoor environment is, an outdoor environment is, and then a natural environment, like a

12 forest school. So imagine I'm in alien dropping onto this planet, tell me what an indoor

13 classroom is.

14

15 R - A room, with lots of toys, craft, drawing, or blocks, cosy, comfort. That's how I see it.

16 And outdoors is in the forest, they'll have mud....

17

18 I - That's a natural forest environment, a natural environment?

19

20 R – Yeah. Forest, mud, water, streams. Just exploring really. They've got all the animals.

21

22 I – Lovely.

23

24 R – And outdoor? Just have an environment where they can run around. So there are lots of

25 things they can explore.

26

27 I – Lovely.

28

29 R – They can be more adventurous outside.

30

31 I - Yeah! Okay, thank you. So with regards to playing and learning can you tell me what

32 you think makes a good, a high-quality, indoor environment, outdoor environment and a

33 natural environment?

34

35 R - Having a variety of stuff indoors.

36

37 I - A variety of stuff? Yes.

38

39 R - So they've got options there for them, so if they decide they want to paint they've got the

40 stuff. They've got crayons, they've got that sort of choice and if they want to read a book

41 they can. Variety. I think that's the most important thing. Having lots of stuff for them to

42 explore and learn. Outdoor, just having the times for them to do risky play.

43

44 I - Outdoor or natural?

45

46 R – Both.

47  
48 I – Both. Okay. That's fine.  
49  
50 R - So then they can learn risky play. They can use their muscles. Just exploring, having,  
51 also having a lot of things out there for them to do as well.  
52  
53 I – And are the variety of things different in the outdoors compared to the natural?  
54  
55 R - Well in the outdoors you can have like the mud kitchen and saucepans, and obstacle  
56 course things.  
57  
58 I – Lovely, yes.  
59  
60 R – And in the natural you can have things about the environment so learning about bugs,  
61 birds, and they can have magnifying glasses and binoculars so they can see them.  
62  
63 I – OK. So what you're saying is the quality outdoor environment, you have to set it up  
64 more?  
65  
66 R – Yeah  
67  
68 I – Whereas in the natural environment is stuff that's there?  
69  
70 R - yeah, yeah.  
71  
72 I – Okay. Fantastic, thank you. So can you tell me how you think these three areas, these  
73 three environments, help speech and language development? So how does the indoors help  
74 children's speech and language development?  
75  
76 R – It always helps because you've got like books you can talk to them. You can write so you  
77 can talk about what they're doing, about what's happening and they can learn that way. And  
78 outdoors, you've got a lot more things you can add to one thing. So like a bird, what sounds  
79 does it make? You can elaborate a bit more and have a bit more speech and language going  
80 on and with the natural, I think that was the natural environment you can elaborate. There's a  
81 lot more words for things and with outdoors you can talk about what they're doing in the mud  
82 kitchen. What are they making? You can just talk a lot more. There's a lot more added  
83 things.  
84  
85 I - Do you think you can get more language in the outside environment compared to the  
86 indoors?  
87  
88 R – Personally I like going outdoors. They learn a lot more. They get to see the natural  
89 world. They get to learn how to look after the world. Because that's what they need. That's  
90 very important. Picking.....We pick blackberries. They love that.  
91  
92 I - So what elements then are essential to help speech and language development? What's  
93 necessary? What do you have to have?  
94  
95 R - You've got to have a good role model.  
96

97 I – Right.  
 98  
 99 R - To help them learn. The parents help as well. And just having the things that they can  
 100 talk about. Like real fruit, fruit and veg, it's not like plastic, just a plastic apple. If you've got  
 101 a real apple it's crunchy, and we can add more words to expand their vocabulary, using words  
 102 that they might not know what it is so you can explain to them and they might end up  
 103 learning words that way.  
 104  
 105 I – So, yeah, so more kind of prompts.  
 106  
 107 R – Yeah. I hope I'm making sense.  
 108  
 109 I – You are! You are! Perfect sense.  
 110  
 111 R - Sometimes I can't say what I mean.  
 112  
 113 I - You're absolutely fine. It's perfect sense! So you're going to design the perfect area, the  
 114 perfect environment to help speech and language. What three things are you going to put in  
 115 it? What are your three most important things?  
 116  
 117 R – Where?  
 118  
 119 I - Wherever you like!  
 120  
 121 R - I'm being outdoors!  
 122  
 123 I - So you're going to be outside?  
 124  
 125 R – Yeah. So they can have balancing things, exploring things, bugs and birds and all that  
 126 sort of stuff so they can learn all about them and lots of muddy puddles!  
 127  
 128 I – Middy puddles!  
 129  
 130 R – And also having where they can plant. Where they can plant vegetables and stuff....  
 131  
 132 I - Coming back to you blackberries?  
 133  
 134 R - Yeah pretty much all that I've mentioned before.  
 135  
 136 I – Do you think they should have some risk?  
 137  
 138 R - yeah because then they can learn how far they are willing to go, to learn from their  
 139 mistakes and feel the positives.  
 140  
 141 I – Yeah. And do you think that helps their speech?  
 142  
 143 R – Yes definitely. If they hurt themselves then they learn when they hurt themselves that  
 144 they will be able to tell people.  
 145

146 I – Fantastic, thank you. So the last question, you'll be pleased to know, what does a quality  
147 environment feel like to you? So you know when you go around to look at houses, for  
148 example, or when parents go and look around at nurseries, and they say it just felt right.  
149 What does that feel like to you? If you walk through the door and it feels right, what feeling  
150 do you get?  
151  
152 R – Happy!  
153  
154 I – Happy?  
155  
156 R - Yes you feel like you're doing your job right.  
157  
158 I – And that makes you happy?  
159  
160 R – Yes!  
161  
162 I – Gorgeous! Thank you.  
163



1 **Phase One - Setting Two – Practitioner Interview (PA2, S2)**

2 Role – Nursery practitioner. Works with 2-3 year olds predominantly. Been in early years  
3 for around 5 ½ years and been at this setting for 5 months. Female.

4

5 I = interviewer

6 R = respondent

7

8 I - So first of all what I'd like you to do, is, could you please define for me what you think  
9 and is an indoor classroom, an outdoor classroom and a natural environment? Imagine I'm an  
10 alien and I've just dropped down into planet today tell me what an indoor classroom is.

11

12 R – Well, with classrooms it depends on the age range of how it would be, for starters,  
13 because if it was a school then.....

14

15 I – Let's think of your kind of age group.

16

17 R – With this age group, well access to all sorts of areas. So there'll be a construction area,  
18 like a reading area, malleable area, arts and crafts, then a natural sort of area so you can like  
19 sensory and everything. Like access to mathematics as well. So like some counting bits and  
20 everything as well and then water and sand. Sort of messy play as well.

21

22 I – Lovely. What about an outdoor classroom?

23

24 R - Pretty much the same sort of things. Access to all of the areas but using the natural  
25 environment around you, so rather than having paint out and stuff, you'd use mud and  
26 different things like soil and planting things.

27

28 I - I have split outdoor classroom and natural environment, kind of forest schools, so there's  
29 that differentiation. Can think of anything that makes that different?

30

31 R – Well yeah, there'd be like mazes and stuff like that in the natural. Lots of digging areas,  
32 bug hotels, and....

33

34 I – In the natural or in the outdoor classroom?

35

36 R – In the....well that would be the natural environment I guess. Digging and stuff but I  
37 times yeah that would be all natural but it would also be incorporated with the outdoor  
38 environment so they're kind of put together in a sense.

39

40 I - Okay yeah. They all kind of overlap a bit then?

41

42 R - Yes it's all joined but then obviously, I guess with natural it's anything that's accessible in  
43 the area. So if you have apple trees that are growing you would use those or anything.... It  
44 depends on where you live and what environment there is. If there is hills and stuff you  
45 could use those to help the children develop and everything.

46

47 I – Yeah, fantastic. So it depends on the kind of environment?

48  
49 R - Yeah literally!  
50  
51 I – Literally! Smashing, ok, so can you tell me then, with regards to playing and learning,  
52 what you think is a quality indoor environment, quality outdoor environment and a quality  
53 natural environment?  
54  
55 R - Well quality for indoor....it needs to be safe and secure. Have access to all of the areas  
56 that I mentioned previously, and ideally not too hot, not too cold. That helps.  
57  
58 I - The right temperature?  
59  
60 R – Yeah. I guess just sort of allowing the children to access everything so they can learn  
61 and develop and explore really.  
62  
63 I - So plenty of things to them for them to access?  
64  
65 R - Yeah but then not too much all at once, if that makes sense, because they can get that  
66 they're overwhelmed if there's too much of everything. So keep it minimalistic but lots of  
67 different things at the same time.  
68  
69 I – Yeah, get the balance right, yeah.  
70  
71 R - So outdoor environment? I guess sort of that same kind of thing. Make sure it's safe and  
72 secure, remove hazards like dog poo, and rubbish and all of that sort of thing. So make sure  
73 they're not accessible to the children, so remove those. Access to using anything in the  
74 environment to help their development.  
75  
76 I - With a natural?  
77  
78 R – Yeah, I guess so. With the natural environment it is just anything that's around really.  
79  
80 I - So can any natural environment be a quality natural environment?  
81  
82 R – No, not really. I guess like if it's a field that's just overgrown I wouldn't say that's quality.  
83  
84 I - So what makes that, what changes that to become quality?  
85  
86 R - So you need it to be clean and remove severe hazards and stuff. They obviously need to  
87 learn so there needs to be like minor ones and stuff, so they can learn oh that's prickly and  
88 things like that, but remove all of the main hazards. Clear it so there's enough space for them  
89 to explore and I guess allowing them, allowing them access to anything so if there's say, I  
90 don't know, if it was just a field then it would ideally be cut in one area or something, so then  
91 they could see the different, sort of....  
92  
93 I - So different experiences?  
94  
95 R - So they can see it growing and everything, and access to, like if there's things, like you  
96 could plant in the soil, you could use that for planting and everything.

97 I – Okay, thank you, fantastic. So can you tell me then, how you think these areas benefit  
 98 speech and language development? So the indoor environment first of all. How does the  
 99 indoor environment help children’s speech and language?  
 100

101 R - Well there’s plenty of opportunities for them to sit down and read stories. I guess with  
 102 speech and language, pretty much any activity you can talk to them about really. So if they’re  
 103 playing with the cars you can be next to them and be like “oh is the car going down the  
 104 ramp?”  
 105

106 I - So you need an adult alongside them?  
 107

108 R - Not all the time. Just for, say a child that hasn’t got the language at first, that can help  
 109 them but then if they’ve got the language, then you can step back and allow them to interact  
 110 with other children and then they can develop and play with the toys. They can... some  
 111 children, they sort of dictate what they’re doing, say what they’re doing and stuff, and other  
 112 children just name things and they develop their area of development that way but...yeah  
 113 with indoors it’s all of the activities mainly we can interact and talk to them about, support  
 114 them where they are.  
 115

116 I – Fantastic. What about the outdoors? How can that help speech and language? The  
 117 outdoors and the natural environment we can put those two together if you like.  
 118

119 R - Yeah I guess that would probably help where you can name new....because there’s a lot  
 120 of things outside that aren’t inside so you can build on that vocabulary. So like trees and  
 121 fences and lots of things that are out there and, I guess sort of the same as inside, you can  
 122 support them and name things. You can do counting games.  
 123

124 I – Is that indoors and outdoors?  
 125

126 R - Yeah I guess, there’s like little games like I Spy and stuff that you can do to encourage  
 127 that language...  
 128

129 I - Anything additional for the natural environment that you haven’t covered already? How it  
 130 can benefit speech and language?  
 131

132 R - (thinking). I’ll probably think of it in an hours time!  
 133

134 I - That’s absolutely fine. What elements then do you think are essential to promote speech  
 135 and language development?  
 136

137 R - Definitely access to other people speaking and to noise itself really because obviously  
 138 well if, if they’re not hearing it they’re not going to pick it up for starters. I guess....adults  
 139 sort of supporting them and hearing them talk. Accessing that talk will really help speech  
 140 and language. I guess with their environment, if they feel safe and secure then they’re going  
 141 to be happy and more confident to speak to you, to use speech and language.  
 142

143 I - Yeah definitely, yes.  
 144

145 R – Well if the environment is safe then that definitely helps a lot, it’s a lot more helpful.  
 146

147 I - So you think the environment has to be safe to have a speech and language?  
148  
149 R - Yes cause if they feel insecure or they don't feel safe they might, like withdraw, they  
150 might....  
151  
152 I - Right. So you're not talking about risky play there? You're talking more about confidence  
153 and.....?  
154  
155 R - Yeah. If it's like... if it's a new environment some children tend to need a bit more  
156 confidence to explore and a bit more support and everything so.... like risky play it's not  
157 necessarily the issue, it's like if it's a hazard and really dangerous or something that might  
158 knock their confidence. If it's risky or something they might want to know what it is, say  
159 like climbing on the tyres outside or something, but once they've....if they need support then  
160 they have to have an adult, they'll build their confidence and then they'll blossom.  
161  
162 I - Fantastic, thank you. Okay, so you're going to design the perfect environment to promote  
163 speech and language development. What three things are the most important for you to put in  
164 there?  
165  
166 R - Well, definitely safe and secure. I'd say, access to all areas of development and..... quite  
167 a tricky one, narrowing it down to three isn't it??  
168  
169 I - You've got two. You talked quite a lot about resources - does that come in your areas of  
170 development?  
171  
172 R - I guess quantity of resources does help. So there's lots of different..... just provide access  
173 to the resources. I guess, it's hard to narrow it down to 3 really.  
174  
175 I - Last question then! What does a quality environment feel like to you? You know when  
176 you go and look round a house, parents say it when they go to look round nurseries don't  
177 they, it just felt right. So if something feels right to you, how does that make you feel?  
178  
179 R - Happy, confident, peaceful but not like too calm, like the children obviously like they're  
180 happy and excited and everything, but so it's not manic I guess. You know destruction and  
181 stuff.  
182  
183 I - Yeah. Managed!  
184  
185 R - Yeah like they're all like engaged and happy and ....yeah confident.  
186  
187 I - Yeah, okay. Thank you very much.  
188  
189  
190

1 **Phase One - Setting Two – Practitioner Interview (PA3, S2)**

2 Role – Nursery assistant since January – been working here a few weeks. Has no previous  
3 early years experience – came from university with an unrelated degree (English language  
4 and psychology). Wants to work in early years as wants to progress to teaching so decided to  
5 start at beginning and work up age ranges to understand children better.  
6

7 I = interviewer

8 R = respondent

9

10

11 I - The first thing I'm going to ask you to do is to define these different environments for  
12 me. What do you think an indoor classroom is.

13

14 R - An indoor classroom is.....??

15

16 I - Imagine I know nothing at all. I'm an alien. How would you describe an indoor classroom  
17 to me?

18

19 R - It's an indoor space or area where children of any age, or anyone, can learn.

20

21 I - Yeah - what would I find there?

22

23 R - Um.....

24

25 I - How would I know I was in an indoor classroom and not in a coffee shop?

26

27 R - There will be... it depends...it will depend on age and what children were learning. So  
28 we'll start off like in a nursery. It would have a lot of toys that they could play with and learn  
29 from

30

31 I - yeah

32

33 R - A lot of books that they could sit down and read and that all develops them as children  
34 and is quite important in the development process I think. So an indoor classroom....lots of  
35 books....it would have areas, different, I'm just going off the nursery, so they would have their  
36 arts and craft area, their allocated area for snacks and their toilet space and their outdoor  
37 space if there is one.. that's indoor classroom....

38

39 I - yeah that's fine. We can go onto outdoor space if you want to. Tell me what's in that  
40 outdoor space.

41

42 R - Outdoor space would be open area with probably a few outdoor toys such as tyres, ropes,  
43 building blocks, again same as inside. You would still have building blocks. And  
44 then...mud. Mud and water that can help learning.

45

46 I - Yes..the messy stuff?

47

48 R - Yeah.  
49  
50 I - Ok and then a natural environment? What's the definition of a forest school type sort of  
51 situation?  
52  
53 R - A natural environment would have things that are not man made so.....natural obviously,  
54 your mud and your water and your wood and a lot of open space. That's the most important  
55 thing I think cos for the children to .....instead of playing with something to then use their  
56 own imaginations. To make up their games themselves that, that's a big part of  
57 development. Always children learning from themselves.  
58  
59 I - Yeah.  
60  
61 R - And just being prompted by what's around them.  
62  
63 I - Ok lovely thank so. So with regards to playing and learning can you describe to me what  
64 you feel constitutes then a quality indoor environment, outdoor classroom and natural  
65 environment? So what makes it quality?  
66  
67 R - What makes it quality? To make sure they have a range of things to make...so not just  
68 one thing that they can focus on.  
69  
70 I - Is this indoor? Or all of them?  
71  
72 R - It would be for all of them.  
73  
74 I - All of them?  
75  
76 R - Yes. Indoor I would say that the different areas that we have in this nursery, the  
77 construction, the arts and crafts, the water, the sand, it all sort of teaches different parts of  
78 their development and then the books obviously is their language and speech development.  
79  
80 I - Is that what makes quality indoor environment then, those resources?  
81  
82 R - Yeah. I think so and obviously I think the people that you have working here makes the  
83 biggest... so you could have nothing and as long as you have, I don't know, good staff,  
84 surrounded by good people who can use their own imaginations to teach the children then I  
85 think you can teach children pretty much anywhere.  
86  
87 I - What about the outdoors then? What makes that quality?  
88  
89 R - What makes the outdoor quality? I guess giving them the chance to....well the outdoor  
90 gives them that change so I guess that is a good....that change is the, the...sorry....it's the  
91 development, is the helping in the development because....  
92  
93 I - In the change do you mean in the environment or the change in the resources.....  
94  
95 R - The change in the resources so even from going...you could have nothing still inside and  
96 then going from the inside to outside would still be a change.  
97

98 I - So are you saying then that if you had the same things in the outdoor classroom as in the  
99 inside that then wouldn't be quality?  
100  
101 R - It would be quality just by going outside.  
102  
103 I - Ah get you! Not a change in the resources necessarily, just a change to the surroundings?  
104  
105 R - Yeh. Yeah.  
106  
107 I - Ok.  
108  
109 R - Just a change yeah to the environment. I'm just saying that if it was exactly the same  
110 thing it would still benefit them going outside and doing the same thing because it would just  
111 trigger a whole new thing for them but.....can you read the question again?  
112  
113 I - With regards to playing and learning can you tell me what you think a quality? We're  
114 looking at natural environment now then. What do you think makes that quality? If you  
115 went to a plain field for example, a flat field, that wouldn't necessarily be quality would  
116 it? Or would it?  
117  
118 R - No it wouldn't necessarily be quality. It depends on what they would do. I think in the  
119 outdoor space making it quality is doing outdoor activities like the planting and using like the  
120 fire that they use at forest school, the water...all the actual stuff that they are learning about  
121 those. That makes it quality. Not necessarily just, even like.....I don't know I think bikes are  
122 a good thing as well.....even though they're man made.  
123  
124 I - Bikes?  
125  
126 R - It's still an outside, outdoor activity which is very beneficial and I think is good quality.  
127  
128 I - Ok.  
129  
130 R - It makes it outdoor, natural environment.  
131  
132 I - So more physical play in the outdoor environment and then more natural led stuff in the  
133 natural?  
134  
135 R - If that makes sense? Yeah.  
136  
137 I - Yeah. Can you tell me then how you think these three areas help speech and language  
138 development? So how does indoors help speech and language?  
139  
140 R - Indoors helps speech and language because of....like in the book area a lot of children like  
141 to have their books read to them. So they, children when they learn they, they mostly.....a lot  
142 of children sorry, repeat what adults do and say, so if we're reading to them they will  
143 eventually learn through copying and repeating so....  
144  
145 I - So that role modelling from adults?  
146  
147 R - Yeah.

148  
149 I - Ok.  
150  
151 R - Indoors also, when they play with other children, this is for, can be for, I know you're  
152 talking about the environment but obviously the environment comes with more children, they  
153 learn a lot more off the other children than they do from us. Even though they copy us and  
154 they look for us for help and things like that, they learn so much from each other. It's  
155 unreal. They really do. That's where they do their most learning with each other.  
156  
157 I - So they don't necessarily need an adult in the mix?  
158  
159 R - No. They don't actually. We just tell them "don't do that, that's not safe ". Seriously they  
160 do...when I see, when I see them talking to each other I think "I've never heard her speak and  
161 the minute she turns to her friend, I hear all of these words from her. I didn't even think that  
162 she could speak".  
163  
164 I - Ah yes. Why do you think that is?  
165  
166 R - Cos they're just in their element. They're just, that's how they, that's, that's their natural  
167 place to be with all their peers, they're the same age. That's where, you know, like how we  
168 would be with our families or with our friends if the person who we are on....that's how they  
169 are in nursery and in school...so...  
170  
171 I - so you said that we say "don't do this, don't do that" ....is that kind of those boundaries that  
172 we put on them...so you think that restricts speech and language?  
173  
174 R - I don't think it restricts speech and language cos I think they do need to be safe first and  
175 foremost so telling them not to do things is just for safety purposes.  
176  
177 I - Yes.  
178  
179 R - Obviously the environment is safe so they're not going to hurt themselves everywhere but  
180 they do need to learn consequences if they hit each other cos at a young age they're still, they  
181 don't understand always so they'll still sneak in there...laughing...  
182  
183 I - So how does the outdoor classroom then benefit speech and language development?  
184  
185 R - Because it's a different environment they'll be using different words so that will then  
186 develop their language through ....so if you're inside you're always going to play with the  
187 same thing, the lego and the blocks and the cars...when you go,outside "oh look, there's a, it's  
188 raining". You wouldn't get rain inside so it just adds, adds to their ...I don't know what it's  
189 called...  
190  
191 I - Vocabulary?  
192  
193 R - Yeah and.....I did do it in psychology. It's like their brain at that age it just soaks up  
194 everything so it just ...the different parts they just.....  
195  
196 I - And then the natural environment? How do you think that helps speech and language  
197 development?



198  
199 R - I don't know.  
200  
201 I - Have you noticed a difference when children go to these different areas?  
202  
203 R - Well I've only been to the forest school once so going off that....  
204  
205 I - well we went this morning to the secret garden, I suppose that's kind of forest school type  
206 ethos as well isn't it? So do you think they speak more in some areas than others or  
207 differently or.....  
208  
209 R - I haven't noticed. I haven't really noticed because I'm guessing that ... oh I don't know I'm  
210 sorry...I can't .....  
211  
212 I - it's fine, it's absolutely fine...  
213  
214 R - I can't remember a time when I've actually seen it so I'm not sure of the facts so I'll.....  
215  
216 I - It's absolutely fine..... but you've talked about different environments and different words  
217 and I suppose the same follows for kind of that environment as well....  
218  
219 R - I think the , I think overall just the change in the environment makes a huge difference to  
220 their language and their speech and their language so...  
221  
222 I - Please don't apologise, that's absolutely fine. So what elements are necessary do you  
223 think to make speech and language development?  
224  
225 R - I think changes, not too regular changes but, you know, changes in their environment is a  
226 big development. Introducing new activities, new objects and toys for them to play  
227 with. And new people as well. When children come and go from the nursery it develops  
228 their social skills and that, that eventually develops their language skills as well.  
229  
230 I - Yeah.  
231  
232 R - Because there's some children, they all speak so differently but they're all trying to do the  
233 same thing. So, like I said, they all learn from each other.  
234  
235 I - And they all bring their home experiences as well don't they?  
236  
237 R - Yeah.  
238  
239 I - Fantastic. Thank you. Right, so you're going to design the perfect environment to  
240 promote speech and language development. What are your three most important things that  
241 you going to put in it?  
242  
243 R - Toys.  
244  
245 I - Ok.  
246

247 R - I think toys are so important. Like lego especially, cos I think lego's the best thing. I  
248 think they do so much with lego at such a young age and they don't realise what they're  
249 making but they make some amazing things. I've seen it....I can't even make that!  
250  
251 I - And do you think they talk while they're doing that?  
252  
253 R - Yeah. And they're.....it's just so good! And.....  
254  
255 I - So you're going to have toys...what else? This is to help speech and language...the three  
256 most important things that you want .  
257  
258 R - Books. And an outdoor space.  
259  
260 I - Ok. Last question you'll be pleased to know. What does a quality environment feel like  
261 to you? Say you go and look around a house, you're looking to buy a new house, or parents  
262 quite often say when they look round nurseries, they just walk through the door and it feels  
263 right. If you walk through a door of somewhere and it feels right, how does that ,are you  
264 feel?  
265  
266 R - It makes you feel happy. I think that happiness is probably the most important and  
267 safety. Safety - I've said safety because they have to be safe. If it's, there's no question but  
268 there's lots of places where they're not necessarily safe, it's not child friendly but it's  
269 definitely...if you love doing it there's always a way to make it safe for them. So safety and  
270 happiness that's my two.  
271  
272 I - Ok that's it! Thank you very, very much.  
273

1 **Phase One - Setting Two – Practitioner Interview (PA4, S2)**

2 Role – Qualified early years practitioner. Worked in early years for about 6 1/2 years and  
3 training to be forest school leader. Portfolio is due to be handed in by end of next week so  
4 nearly a qualified forest school leader.

5  
6 I = interviewer

7 R = respondent

8

9

10

11 I - What I'm going to ask you to do first of all then is give me a definition of what an indoor  
12 classroom is, an outdoor classroom and what a natural environment is. What is your take on  
13 that? Imagine I know nothing about these environments at all. How would you explain to  
14 me what an indoor classroom is?

15

16 R - An indoor classroom? There will be activities set up. Different resources, like plastic,  
17 all different kind of things set up. Different areas. So you've got your home corner, your  
18 dressing up areas, then you've got sand and water, arts and crafts areas, reading, reading  
19 areas will be set up within that area. All in their own areas.

20

21 I - Yes and then what about an outdoor classroom?

22

23 R - Are you doing outdoor and natural different?

24

25 I – Yeah, yeah different.

26

27 R - So outdoor you'll probably take the, take the stuff from the inside and you'll take it  
28 outside. So you take maybe your bricks, the wooden bricks to go outside and your drawing,  
29 your paper, paint brushes. So you take the resources from inside and take them into the  
30 outdoor environment.

31

32 I – Yeah. So it's the same resources?

33

34 R - Yeah it's the same resources but you just take them, transfer them outside.

35

36 I – Okay.

37

38 R - And the natural environment is you just use whatever is in the natural environment. So  
39 you have like the grass, the trees, the leaves, you've got water outside, loose parts, stones.  
40 You'd just use that and you wouldn't take anything with you. Apart from maybe water if you  
41 need it but that still natural, so you minimise what you take with you. You might have paper.

42

43 I - Okay brilliant. So what makes these environments quality? So tell me what you think is it  
44 quality indoor environment?

45

46 R - It'll be age-appropriate toys for the children. Ummm .. things that the children are going  
47 to be completely engaged in. So you know, yeah, good resources..

48  
 49 I - Good resources?  
 50  
 51 R - Yeah, well not broken if you know what I mean.  
 52  
 53 I - No missing parts or things like that?  
 54  
 55 R - Yeah. What was the question again?  
 56  
 57 I - With regards to playing and learning what constitutes a quality indoor environment?  
 58  
 59 R - Yeah having good resources out. Yeah so areas that engage the children, like  
 60 investigation that they can engage in to enhance their learning.  
 61  
 62 I - Yeah. And quality outdoor environment? Again different from natural.  
 63  
 64 R - It's the same. Same as taking the outdoor bits out and natural will be um... well natural  
 65 you've got the seasons, you've got a lot more things out there all the time. It changes the  
 66 seasons, so there's more variety, a lot more to talk about, it's different. So you've got the  
 67 seasons and even though you don't take the things out, it's not the same. It changes outside.  
 68  
 69 I - Yeah. Is that what makes it quality?  
 70  
 71 R - Yeah I think so. Yeah. Being outside, I think, obviously you need stuff in the area. You  
 72 can't just have grass. So like you've got digging areas, where they can dig and investigate.  
 73 Climbing. You've got trees and wildlife around.  
 74  
 75 I - Yeah. Climbing. So a bit of risk?  
 76  
 77 R - Yeah. Risky play. Using tools....safely.  
 78  
 79 I - Using tools safely?  
 80  
 81 R - Yeah.  
 82  
 83 I - So can you tell me then how you think these three environments help speech and language  
 84 development? So how does the indoor classroom help speech and language?  
 85  
 86 R - Indoors we've got like home areas where they can act out different scenarios so they've  
 87 got that speech and they can be like their super heroes and they learn from that. They can  
 88 play with the sand and the water. They can make up things with the cars in there and then  
 89 they can make sounds and noises. Reading books, obviously they're learning when they're  
 90 reading books, learning to describe things. What else? Well art and craft, they can say "can  
 91 you get me a long thing?" or "what colour would you like?" So in all areas you can speak  
 92 and help speech and language really.  
 93  
 94 I - Fantastic. What about the outdoor classroom?  
 95  
 96 R - Outside you're in a different environment so things like aeroplanes can go by. You can  
 97 hear the wind, you can have birds, so it's a different thing and they're learning different

98 things outside to what they would do inside. They can use their senses maybe different. So if  
99 it's raining or it's windy they can describe them. I think that when they're outside they're  
100 more, they're freer outside.  
101  
102 I - In the natural environment are you talking about?  
103  
104 R - I think outdoor environment as well. Being in the outdoors I think they are freer to run  
105 around and maybe engage a bit more together, like playing games or....  
106  
107 I - Freer as in less boundaries?  
108  
109 R - Probably yeah. I think they feel freer, the children, because they're in a more relaxed...  
110 they're more relaxed when they're outside and like their games....well I suppose they've got  
111 more space outside. They can run around outside whereas inside they can't do that. So like  
112 more, their social skills are better because they're like playing.... three little pigs that's an  
113 example, ours like playing, and then they all engage in that and they're running around,  
114 they're saying the words and they're speaking. So you wouldn't get that indoors as much as  
115 outdoors. They do that play themselves. It's like child led. They just.... I think the like  
116 having the space actually outside, like I say being freer. So like when you go out you give  
117 them the boundaries and the rules when you first go, and then they're free to choose what  
118 they want to do.  
119  
120 I - Is there anything additional in the natural environment that you think helps speech and  
121 language that you've not covered?  
122  
123 R - Probably because they don't have any resources, there's no actual...we don't set any  
124 resources....well we have an activity but there's no set resources, so whatever they do is,  
125 they're child initiated so they do their own play outside. Like you say when they're learning  
126 about nature they are finding things that speech is going on. They're looking at the different  
127 seasons, different leaves, colours, bugs. That all brings their speech on. I think they don't  
128 do play. They do make their own games up when they have nothing there to play. They are  
129 really good at doing their own games. They'll do their own games. They run around the  
130 maze. They do chasing games and that's all their own ideas and usually they'll all go, they  
131 will all join in.  
132  
133 I - Do you see that more outside than you do indoors?  
134  
135 R - Yeah definitely yeah.  
136  
137 I - Okay thank you. What elements are essential do you think to promote speech and  
138 language development? what things do we need?  
139  
140 R - Things to talk about really. Things to interest children. Like resources, interesting  
141 resources, changeable. Change them so it's different things out to capture their interests.....  
142  
143 I - Yeah okay. So you're going to design the perfect environment to help children's speech  
144 and language development. What are the three most important things that you want in that  
145 environment?  
146

147 R – (thinking for sometime) You're getting my brain working (laughter). I've got to say open  
 148 space. I don't know.  
 149  
 150 I – Yeah.  
 151  
 152 R - An open space.....(thinking time) Um....  
 153  
 154 I - The three most important things that you've got in your environment? You've talked  
 155 about resources quite a bit, things to talk about.  
 156  
 157 R - Yeah I'd want resources. I was thinking of outside space and everything to enhance their  
 158 play.  
 159  
 160 I - So you want a big space. That's the most important thing...  
 161  
 162 R - And some resources. Have they got to be specific resources?  
 163  
 164 I – No, they can be general. Any kind of resources that you'd fancy? All natural or.....  
 165  
 166 R - Oh yes probably natural. Yes. Natural loose parts actually. Loose parts. Yes.  
 167  
 168 I - So open space. Resources that are natural and loose parts. Anything else you're going to  
 169 have?  
 170  
 171 R - Maybe a sitting area? Like a cosy area where they can sit and have conversations.  
 172  
 173 I – Yeah. A quieter area?  
 174  
 175 R - Yeah like a den or something like that. Yeah.  
 176  
 177 I – Yeah, fantastic. Last question then, you'll be pleased to know! What does a quality  
 178 environment feel like to you? So you know if you go and look round a house or parents say  
 179 when they look around nurseries, "it just feels right" when you walk through the door. If you  
 180 have that feeling, what does that feel like to you?  
 181  
 182 R - Children will be happy. It will be a happy environment. They're engaged in their play.  
 183 Staff are happy. The place is reasonably clean...  
 184  
 185 I - And does that make you feel happy?  
 186  
 187 R – Yes if you felt happy yeah. So if you are at ease, you felt the children are happy. Then  
 188 that makes you feel relaxed and think that this is a good place to be.  
 189  
 190 I – Smashing, that's it, thank you. Is there anything else you want to add that we haven't  
 191 covered?  
 192  
 193 R - Well yeah the loose parts actually yeah and....it's like outside in the secret garden there's  
 194 all the logs and they really like that.... so when we go outside, we tend not to take. like today  
 195 we didn't have anything out. It was all natural play and they are quite happy to play there.  
 196 Me and C (another practitioner) go out sometimes and they just get all the um...we sit back

197 and watch and they get all the logs and they make cars.... it's amazing! We could get the cars  
198 out and they don't need it, really, sometimes, the resources we have in here.... if you just  
199 leave them outside they make their own things out of the loose parts. So using natural loose  
200 parts...  
201  
202 I – Do you think that their play and their speech is different then?  
203  
204 R – Yes it develops their speech because they make their own different things up so that...  
205 they make different games up so they're talking to each other. I was going to say something  
206 else as well ....yeah and then obviously they use it for like counting things so actually covers  
207 all their areas and they don't realise they're doing it. But they do play well. They do play  
208 really well. I think they all play well outside and they use their imagination to make up their  
209 own games, so it's all their play.  
210  
211 I – Fantastic. Thank you very much. Thank you.  
212  
213

1 **Phase One - Setting Two – Parent Interview (PA5, S2)**

2 Role – Mum with a 3 ½ year old daughter who attends pre-school room of nursery and have  
3 done so for around 6 months. She will go to school in September.

4 I = interviewer

5 R = respondent

6

7 I – Okay, so first of all what I would like you to do is define - so pretend I'm an alien who has  
8 just plonked down here. Tell me what an indoor classroom will be. What do you think is an  
9 indoor classroom?

10

11 R - A place where children will learn. They will communicate with other children and also  
12 be happy in that environment so they'll be able to play and express themselves but at the same  
13 time learning as well.

14

15 I - What would I find there? What can I find in an indoor classroom?

16

17 R – You'll find paper. Things for children to write with and draw with. So pens, pencils,  
18 paint, things like that. Books so that children can read. Toys that will help them to learn and  
19 just a colourful atmosphere.

20

21 I – Lovely. What about an outdoor classroom?

22

23 R - I think an outdoor classroom should include things that are natural outdoors, so trees,  
24 wildlife....

25

26 I - When I'm saying natural classroom and outdoors I'm differentiating, separating out an  
27 outdoor classroom type play area and then a forest school. So different. So just to give you a  
28 bit more so.... natural trees, wildlife, that's absolutely fine....What else? So outdoor  
29 classroom? Toys or anything? Would you expect to see them in an outdoor classroom?

30

31 R - Yes still toys.

32

33 I - And then Forest School? The natural stuff, the natural environment?

34

35 R - You will have to explain a bit more to me the difference between a Forest School and the  
36 actual outdoor classroom so....

37

38 I – Yeah. Have you been up to school and had a look around?

39

40 R – No, no.

41

42 I – So their outdoor classroom, if you went over to the school and had a look over there, in  
43 that or any reception class really, their outdoor classroom generally is almost a copy of what  
44 is inside, with a roof on it. So the walls are all open and you've got fresh air and exposure to  
45 the elements but they just haven't got.... It's kind of covered but they might have slightly



46 different things. So they might have stuff where they can be a bit more physical but generally  
 47 it's very similar to the indoors. I know they haven't got one here have they, not like that?  
 48

49 R – So I know that here they've got the secret garden which is more like the natural I don't  
 50 really know what an outdoor classroom is.  
 51

52 I - That's absolutely fine. So Forest School then, how would you explain that? As the  
 53 natural, wildlife?  
 54

55 R - Yeah exactly, for the forest school.  
 56

57 I – Okay, so can you tell me then ....I won't ask about the outdoor environment then because  
 58 you obviously haven't got any knowledge of that...  
 59

60 R – No I don't really.  
 61

62 I - That's fine so we'll just look at the indoors and the natural environment. Is that alright?  
 63

64 R – Yeah, that's fine.  
 65

66 I - So with regards to playing and learning then can you tell me what you think is a quality  
 67 indoor environment? What makes something like that good quality?  
 68

69 R - That's a really hard question. It's not really something I think....  
 70

71 I - Did you look round anywhere else before you came here?  
 72

73 R – No. To be honest it was childminders that my daughter had been at beforehand, so  
 74 childminders have different kind of environment to what a nursery does. So this was the first  
 75 nursery that we looked at. So.....and we liked it straight away, that's the thing.  
 76

77 I - What bits of it did you like then?  
 78

79 R - Well it's easy to say, the feel of it. As soon as you walked in I think you could tell. It  
 80 didn't have any funny smells (laughter). It just.... you looked around and all the children  
 81 seemed to be busy doing something. There was no child just sat there, not playing or not  
 82 doing anything. They were all busy whether it was by themselves just painting or playing  
 83 with other children, they were all just doing things.  
 84

85 I – Yeah. Yeah so that quality environment has got to have that stuff in it to allow them to do  
 86 that?  
 87

88 R - So yeah, yeah exactly!  
 89

90 I – So resources and nice smells!  
 91

92 R – (laughter) Yes!  
 93

94 I - It's true. It's true though, you don't want to walk in and smell dirty nappies!  
 95

96 R - I know obviously children have dirty nappies but still it just had a nice feel to it and, yeah,  
 97 and I think for us anyway it was about the fact that our daughter was happy as soon as she  
 98 came in. She obviously felt like it was a quality environment for her. Yeah just ticked all the  
 99 boxes really.  
 100  
 101 I - Yeah. That's fine. That was one of my questions actually, about what does the quality  
 102 environment feel like to you, so you've answered that one already. So as you say, it does,  
 103 you do feel it don't you when you walk through the door? It's like when you go and look  
 104 round a house isn't it?  
 105  
 106 R - Yeah!  
 107  
 108 I - You just walk through and it feels right!!  
 109  
 110 R - Yeah. You know what that feeling is and I said as soon as we came in we knew that all  
 111 that our little girl would be happy and she has been, so....  
 112  
 113 I - And in that sense that makes you happy?  
 114  
 115 R - Yeah! Yeah exactly. Definitely.  
 116  
 117 I - Okay. What about the Forest School then, the secret garden part? What about that makes  
 118 it quality?  
 119  
 120 R - I like the fact that it's, it's natural but it's also made into something that's not natural. I  
 121 like the fact that they use things like twigs to do their mark making and things like that and  
 122 it's just... it's taking the classroom outdoors but using everything that is found outdoors. So  
 123 that to me, I love that, I think it's brilliant. And children can get messy and it doesn't matter if  
 124 they get messy. I think that's great that....  
 125  
 126 I - It's good that you've got that attitude!  
 127  
 128 R - Yeah! Yeah I think it's great. They don't get the chance to get messy like that at home  
 129 all the time so to be able to go to a Forest School or a secret garden and to have that  
 130 opportunity and just to let themselves go crazy (laughter) and get dirty. It's just great.  
 131  
 132 I - Is your daughter here today?  
 133  
 134 R - Yes. She saw me as I walked in.  
 135  
 136 I - Ah was she alright?  
 137  
 138 R - Yeah she was fine!  
 139  
 140 I - I went across with them to the secret garden this morning and they were all in the stream,  
 141 you know the water? It was absolutely brilliant!  
 142  
 143 R - Yeah that as well. Playing with water because children love to play with water and I  
 144 know y little girl does and the fact that that's all naturally there. It's brilliant!  
 145

146 I - Yeah it was good!  
147  
148 R - Yeah and you know it's safe for them as well. It's not a pond or anything like that. It's  
149 safe but it's just, it's just nice. Really good!  
150  
151 I - Brilliant. Thank you. So can you tell me how, if you are aware of, or anything you can  
152 help of how these environments help speech and language development? So how can an  
153 indoor environment help your daughter develop her speech?  
154  
155 R - Well obviously within the indoor environment you have books. So reading books to them  
156 or getting them to learn how to read. Things like that. So if you've got that there for them to  
157 actually speak from and also they can speak to other children all the time. Singing as well so  
158 when they have their music time. Singing obviously helps a lot. (thinking)  
159  
160 I - That's fine.  
161  
162 R - Yeah.  
163  
164 I - What about out in secret garden bit? How do you think that helps speech and language  
165 differently? Because obviously there's no books, or reading or anything?  
166  
167 R - Yeah. It's just the talking to other children and teachers and I think it's probably less  
168 outside than indoors because you don't have things like the books. You can, they can make  
169 animal noises you know if they hear birds and so tweeting noises and so it's more about  
170 noises I suppose rather than actual words. But yeah...  
171  
172 I - Okay lovely. So what elements do you think are necessary to help speech and language  
173 development?  
174  
175 R - I do think books definitely. It's going to be books.  
176  
177 I - Have you got lots of books at home?  
178  
179 R - Yeah we do we try to read where we can, point out pictures to her so she'll tell you what  
180 they are so even if you're not prompting her. You know she'll be telling you. I  
181 think.....because she plays a lot by herself I've noticed that she will talk to herself so like  
182 role-play, things like that. You know she's got a little doll or little people or something like  
183 that or cars she will talk to herself a lot. So your notice her speech is developing just through  
184 talking to herself and playing with all these different things. There are apps on iPads and  
185 things like that and she'll obviously watch and they'll help her like with speech and ones with  
186 songs on especially....there's so many songs that she's learnt off of apps that are on the tablet.  
187  
188 I - Really?  
189  
190 R - Yeah! Yeah, ones that I've never heard before apparently all children know (laughter)  
191 but I don't know where they come from but....  
192  
193 I - Has she taught you them?  
194

195 R – Yes so they get stuck in my head as well. So she'll just be around singing them to herself  
 196 which is great so yeah I think things like that do help as well.  
 197  
 198 I – Okay, so if you were going to design the perfect environment then to help speech and  
 199 language development what would be the three most important things that you would want to  
 200 put in it?  
 201  
 202 R - I think I've got to go back to the books!  
 203  
 204 I - I knew you were gonna say that! (laughter) That's absolutely fine!  
 205  
 206 R - I mean books or tablets that you can read. So anything that they can read. Things that  
 207 make noises so either music or, you know, sound.  
 208  
 209 I – Yeah.  
 210  
 211 R - I think they're really helpful because you know it's easy to....to read something is  
 212 different to hearing it so I think you've got to read and hear something to learn the speech  
 213 side of it. (thinking)  
 214  
 215 I – I'm making your brain work aren't I?  
 216  
 217 R – Yeah! And I've just finished work!!! Can you read the question again?  
 218  
 219 I - You're going to design the perfect environment to promote speech and language  
 220 development. What are the three most important things for you?  
 221  
 222 R - So books.....( thinking time)..... I think probably being able to write as well would come  
 223 into it. I think all of those things together so having like pens and that.  
 224  
 225 I – Those sort of mark making things?  
 226  
 227 R – Yes.  
 228  
 229 I - The paint and the chalk and?  
 230  
 231 R – Yeah. I think even if they're not forming words or letters or something they can still  
 232 make pictures and tell you what the pictures are. Explain to you, you know, that's mummy  
 233 and that's daddy and things like that so I think that will be really advantageous to actually  
 234 giving them the .....  
 235  
 236 I – The means to talk?  
 237  
 238 R – Yeah. I think that's their way, they've got to communicate through other forms and  
 239 drawing pictures and then going onto letters and then going onto words it kind of follows  
 240 on....  
 241  
 242 I - Okay that's brilliant. You've already answered question seven about what it feels like so  
 243 that's it. Is there anything else you want to add that we haven't covered off?  
 244

245 R - No I think everything is there. I think it's covered. I think I've said everything.  
246  
247 I – Fantastic. Thank you  
248

1    **Phase One - Setting Two – Parent Interview (PA6, S2)**

2    Role – Parent of four year old daughter (L) who will go to school in September. This

3    interview was carried out in parents house with L present (see notes on field notes).

4

5    I = interviewer

6    R = respondent

7

8    I - So first of all what I'm going to ask you to do, if you could please define for me, what you

9    think, what pops into your head immediately, what you think an indoor classroom is, an

10   outdoor classroom is and a natural environment?

11

12   R – Okay. Yes, okay.

13

14   I - What are the three different environments?

15

16   R – Okay.

17

18   I - Do you want to do indoors first? What do you think about when you think about indoor

19   classrooms?

20

21   R - When I think about indoor, I think of an enclosed environment, within a, within a

22   building. It's well set out though so it has an element of space, so that there is free movement

23   for the children to move around and it has an area, it has defined areas that they can explore

24   and so there's, I think for me having a craft area, a painting area and somewhere to put books

25   and relaxation but also somewhere to eat. So for me I'd like it, I'd like to be defined but they

26   can still see each other as well. So not totally enclosed.

27

28   I – Yeah.

29

30   R - So it enables free movement but indoors so

31

32   I - Open plan as it were?

33

34   R – Yes. Open plan. I think it needs to have like, could see a well-defined indoor

35   environment.

36

37   I – Yes.

38

39   R - And then, if you then think of outdoor, I think completely outdoors is how I view...

40

41   I - An outdoor classroom?

42

43   R – Oh, an outdoor classroom? Okay. Yeah. I sometimes see it as two things. In some

44   ways I see it as, again outdoors but still have some structure to it.

45

46   I – Yeah.

47

48 R - So that there is defined areas of exploration and, you know it could be a mud kitchen, it  
 49 could be outdoor tools, it could be some woodworking and I think an outdoor classroom still  
 50 has an element of learning and structure but involving the outdoors to do, to deliver that. Is  
 51 how I would describe, in my thoughts that's what an outdoor classroom would be. Sorry,  
 52 what was the third?  
 53  
 54 I - The natural environment, so like a Forest School type environment.  
 55  
 56 R - Oh, OK. So that would be totally free. So there is less structure. It's much more  
 57 exploration. I think much more free flow and the children exploring freely and using their  
 58 creativity without any bounds, or...  
 59  
 60 I - Yes. No boundaries?  
 61  
 62 R - No boundaries. And they can use all sorts of different tools. They create sticks or bits of  
 63 wood or, and I think that for me then would be the free, free type of environment.  
 64  
 65 I - Yes.  
 66  
 67 R - Which is not constrained, and it hasn't got the constraints of an outdoor classroom type  
 68 environment. Because I think some schools, when I've looked around schools, they have an  
 69 outdoor environment which you could call as an outdoor classroom, but it's an extension to  
 70 the indoors, if that makes sense.  
 71  
 72 I - Yes, definitely.  
 73  
 74 R - And they're nice and I think it allows children to break out of that restrictive  
 75 environment, if they feel that way, to get outdoors and to get that freedom in the fresh air,  
 76 which I think is really nice, but forest school, I think, provides a lot more freedom and I think  
 77 even like the secret garden, I think it could....You could call them outdoor classrooms  
 78 because they have a certain level of structure but really it's proper outdoor play and  
 79 exploration and natural which I think is great.  
 80  
 81 I - Brilliant.  
 82  
 83 R - That's what I think and L loves it. She just adores it, and the state I picked her up in the  
 84 other day! C (practitioner) said I'm so sorry! (*laughter*).  
 85  
 86 I - When I was there they were playing in the stream and they were absolutely loving it!  
 87 They were getting their wellies and just pouring it out! But that's great isn't it?  
 88  
 89 R - I picked up L's wellies one day, I needed her wellies as I'd said I think they're too small  
 90 and I think half the field was in there (*laughter*). I washed them out in the sink in the utility  
 91 room and just, oh my goodness, it was disgusting! I said no wonder your feet come back  
 92 black because it's black inside the wellies! (*laughter*) and C (practitioner) just said I knew  
 93 you wouldn't mind! I said its fine, its fine, it's whatever. I said to L I think you need a bath  
 94 tonight! (*laughter*)  
 95  
 96 I - So with regards to those three environments, what do you think makes those quality? So,  
 97 again, looking at the three individually.

98  
99 R – Yes.  
100  
101 I – So what’s a quality indoor environment for you?  
102  
103 R - For me indoors, I think it’s a certain level of structure and areas for the children to play  
104 but still allowing that creativity and, and movement. I think, I think also probably for me, it’s  
105 sort of being able to change it as well because I think even though children like to have  
106 stability, new things being replenished and, and new activities and new projects and new  
107 ideas, they quite like that.  
108  
109 I – Yes.  
110  
111 R - So having probably areas that is, so like having the home corner and like the dressing up  
112 and that free play. They love the books and some children love that quiet zone. And I think  
113 having areas that I think really respond to different children and different ways of learning  
114 because they all have such different ways of wanting to engage. And I think also trying to  
115 allow children to not only explore what their strengths are but also probably encouraging  
116 them to do things that they wouldn’t naturally do. Like L just totally adores cooking and  
117 playing in the home corner but she also is such a creative little thing. She’s always painting  
118 and the amount of copious stuff we get bought home. It’s great but they also engage them  
119 with structured activities, that at group time, to encourage them to try other things which I  
120 think is important, rather than just allowing free choice the whole time.  
121  
122 I - So getting that mix right?  
123  
124 R - Yes I think that’s really important and I think engaging with group time and talking and  
125 sharing, I think it’s....  
126  
127 L enters the room – Muummy I’ve found my favourite picture  
128  
129 R – Have you?  
130  
131 I – Let’s see!!  
132  
133 R – What is it? Is it that one?  
134  
135 I – That’s beautiful!  
136  
137 R – Why is it your favourite?  
138  
139 L - Because it’s orange and red.  
140  
141 R - Why did you make that? Do you remember?  
142  
143 L – No.  
144  
145 R - No I think it was firework day. I think that’s a bonfire. Shall we look at the next one and  
146 see if we can have some clues? Maybe, probably, oh that was to daddy, so it might of been  
147 Father’s Day.



148  
 149 I - It's beautiful!  
 150  
 151 R - I like the colours.  
 152  
 153 I - The colours are gorgeous!  
 154  
 155 R - So yeah you like mixing don't you? You like mixing colours.  
 156  
 157 L - Mum?  
 158  
 159 R - Yes?  
 160  
 161 L - I want to find that...  
 162  
 163 R - Why don't you give it to daddy to hold? (L leaves). So that I think, for me constitutes  
 164 quality in an indoor environment. I think having the variety and the opportunity to do  
 165 different things.  
 166  
 167 I - Would you say that's the same outside as well?  
 168  
 169 R - Yes. Yes I think in an outdoor classroom. I think I still needs that same management  
 170 though, from the staff because I think it's very easy to allow them out to let them just to do as  
 171 it ....  
 172  
 173 *L enters the room again to show colouring*  
 174  
 175 R - You've got your colouring haven't you? You got that for your birthday didn't you?  
 176  
 177 I - Wow! Did you colour that in?  
 178  
 179 R - Yes!  
 180  
 181 I - Well your colouring is fantastic!  
 182  
 183 R - With a little bit of help from mummy!  
 184  
 185 I - It's all in the lines!  
 186  
 187 R - I know! It was very good wasn't it? You were very clever doing that!  
 188  
 189 I - That's beautiful. That's really lovely!  
 190  
 191 R - You were very careful weren't you, doing that?  
 192  
 193 I - It's beautiful colouring in! Even the tiny little bits! Oh - you're so clever!  
 194  
 195 L - Mummy helped me!  
 196  
 197 I - Mummy's clever too then!

198  
199 R - So we're going to get more and more things given to us!! (*laughter*) But I think the  
200 outdoors it's harder to manage because children just want to just go outside and just do so I  
201 think it's probably, more can be taught through play. Like water play, and messy play and I  
202 think in an outdoor environment but I still think it still needs that sort of level of areas and  
203 structure and I think it's harder in the outdoors because of the space. I think space is  
204 important. I'm thinking about when L was at [a previous setting] and they had the outdoor  
205 little bit.  
206  
207 I - That tiny bit?  
208  
209 R - Yes but they still managed to have some nice things in that and extend the herbs and, had  
210 such things that were enjoyable to be there and do and I think it's harder to get the outdoor  
211 classroom right, I think. It's space dependent.  
212  
213 I - Yes, definitely. And then what about the forest school then, that natural environment?  
214 How do you make that quality?  
215  
216 R - I think it depends on the staff to be honest, because you want to make it safe to a certain  
217 extent within the bounds of exploration, to be a quality environment. So you want to be able  
218 to give them things and allow them to discover things that enable their play. And maybe give  
219 them projects in order to help structure that I suppose. So again I think it needs to be  
220 managed to a certain extent. So it's not just roaming freely through the woods. (*laughter*)  
221 So I think it's very dependent on how that structure, but I think equally we want to allow  
222 them to a certain level of risk and challenge, because I think that environment allows them to  
223 do that.  
224  
225 I - Yes. So do they need an environment to do that in?  
226  
227 R - They do. Yes.  
228  
229 I - A blank farmer's field is not going to do that is it?  
230  
231 R - No. No, that's right. So you are going to have to provide things like bits of wood, and  
232 maybe a campfire but again setting the boundaries of what is safe. But also what risk you  
233 would allow in order for them to explore. And also if you're giving them tools to learn how  
234 to use then how are you going to supervise them? What sort of things are you going to get  
235 them to do to explore? Like making potions and mixing things, and then is it in a muddy  
236 area? Yeah, I think, it's got to be, it's an environment that I think is... I think it has to be  
237 controlled to a certain extent but you still want that freedom and it's as natural as possible.  
238  
239 I - Yes, yes.  
240  
241 R - I think and that's why I think Forrest School works well because it gives that nice mix.  
242  
243 I - That balance?  
244  
245 R - Yes. That balance.  
246

247 I – Fantastic. Thank you. So can you tell me then how you think each of these areas help  
 248 speech and language development?  
 249

250 R - I think indoors, I think it allows.... it's a closer environment so I think there's a lot more  
 251 forced sharing, negotiation, team work, because they're on top of each other, the children, so  
 252 it makes them have to work together a little bit, or negotiate, and the more children then it  
 253 becomes even more so. It's that managing of expression and managing emotions, I think is  
 254 really important and I think some children find that quite hard indoors when there's a lot of  
 255 children. And I know sometimes L gets frustrated because there's too many children for her  
 256 to be heard and understood, and she wants to talk to the adults and the staff can't be because  
 257 they're busy doing other things. And I think that that can be a bit of a challenge at times.  
 258 But then it's no different from school. So I think children have got to get used to learning  
 259 how to express and how to work with other, with other children, in that environment. In  
 260 some ways, for particular with pre-school, I do think it's important that it does emulate a  
 261 little bit of the school environment so that they learn how to become patient and wait or say  
 262 when they need something and they express that.  
 263

264 I - It's all part of that school readiness thing?  
 265

266 R - Yes it is and having those structured times as well. Well, they're doing letter pots and L  
 267 just loves letter pots. So we do a lot of prep work here and we go round the house looking  
 268 for the letter of the week before she goes. So she goes pre-armed with, I print off a sheet for  
 269 her and then she colours it in and then we try to think of all the things that we've got round  
 270 the house, that she can take to put in the pot for that letter.  
 271

272 I – Oh, how lovely!  
 273

274 R – So she takes them to nursery, thinking that's the letter for that week so that we do a bit of  
 275 pre-work with her and then think about. She's been really good at sorting things that begin  
 276 with that letter.  
 277

278 I - That's lovely.  
 279

280 R - And that works really well, getting her then thinking about it and then the time she has at  
 281 nursery. She only has two days at A (setting concerned) and two days at preschool and  
 282 they're very different environments, which actually is good.  
 283

284 I – Yeah.  
 285

286 R – And very different in their approaches. I think that has worked really well and she copes  
 287 really well with that. And I think that helps her talk to different children who are at different  
 288 levels, and different staff, different environments  
 289

290 I – Yes  
 291

292 R – And you see that difference in her and how she adapts and adopts that. And then we took  
 293 her to a centre parks, to a climbing wall and we've got two nieces, who are a lot older than L  
 294 and it was one of the younger ones first time on the climbing wall and they each thought that  
 295 they could do it. So I said I think she would. So we took her along thinking we'll see how

296 she goes and she was the littlest, wee-est and just she stood and listened to all the  
 297 instructions. Bless her heart. She was amazing and so a real proud moment.  
 298  
 299 I – Yeah. Yeah. The confidence!  
 300  
 301 R – Yes. The confidence to interact with the, the activity leaders and ask questions and go  
 302 off  
 303  
 304 I – And that attention, that’s all the start of, that’s communication isn’t it? You can’t  
 305 communicate if you can’t pay attention.  
 306  
 307 R – No and asking questions and saying what she wants and  
 308  
 309 I – And do you think that, it’s those kind of environments that help that?  
 310  
 311 R – Yes. That whole...  
 312  
 313 I – I mean you obviously do a lot with her anyway  
 314  
 315 R – Yeah but I think it’s good that she, you know, that determination. She wasn’t going to  
 316 give up. She was going to get up that wall (*Laughter*) and she went really high. And also  
 317 that level of risk as well. She was working out the harness and she kicked off and jumped  
 318 down and she bumped a bit and thought, and it looked like she was up quite high so she had  
 319 to climb down because it was a bit high to jump off. So she was doing that, that risk  
 320 assessment and analysis and thinking, hmm that might be a bit high to jump off but that  
 321 evaluation of that was really interesting that she could do that, without any of us. We weren’t  
 322 even allowed in the enclosure. We were just watching from afar. (*laughter*)  
 323  
 324 I – Okay  
 325  
 326 R – I think that’s really helped her and that gave me a lot of encouragement because she’ll  
 327 cope with school. She’ll cope well. The fact that she could talk to someone who she’d never  
 328 met before and was quite happy to be involved in it.  
 329  
 330 I – Well she’s not really met me much before has she? And she’s quite comfortable with me!  
 331  
 332 R – It’s when we go to parties and the children’s entertainer. She’s giving them all... we  
 333 went to the panto and she was heckling like mad. It was quite embarrassing actually.  
 334 (*laughter*) So she’s not the quiet retiring kind!  
 335  
 336 I – She’s no shrinking violet! So you talked about the indoor environment helping speech  
 337 and language. What about the others?  
 338  
 339 R – I think outdoor allows them to...  
 340  
 341 (*husband comes in saying he has to go. Checked that car not blocked him in. Said goodbye*)  
 342  
 343 R – So I think outdoors, it’s a freer environment and therefore I think, they then have more  
 344 description of what they’re doing and engaging with, talking about what they’re doing.  
 345 Sometimes I think it also allows them a bit of solo time, which I think is actually quite useful.

346  
347 I - Are you talking about Forest School here?  
348  
349 R - No, no, the outdoor classroom. I think just gaining the understanding and working out  
350 things for themselves, which I think is needed actually. That time away. Just like having that  
351 chance to reflect, I think, is important and sometimes I don't think they get enough time for  
352 that sometimes. But I think also they have chance then to have different conversations, about  
353 what things feel like and that whole texture and exploring those sort of things. So this feels  
354 sticky. This feels splashy. That whole tactile environment. I think, that's what I think they  
355 gain from that exploration, I think in the outdoor. And then forest school, I think even....  
356 takes it to another level again. Gives even more chance to reflect and just explore things and  
357 but then....a sort of excitement, I think, as well. It's all very different. Different words and  
358 different things that they probably wouldn't of been exposed to. Then they talk about new  
359 things that they're doing. I think it extends vocabulary actually, of new environments and  
360 new experiences, and new words, that they probably wouldn't of done with you or....we hear  
361 all sorts of new words from her that are obviously happening outside and I think all these new  
362 environments bring out ....  
363  
364 I - Vocabulary?  
365  
366 R - Yes, vocabulary, Yes. Does that make sense?  
367  
368 I - Yeah, perfect sense. Definitely. So what elements do you think, in all of this, are  
369 essential to promote speech and language development?  
370  
371 R - I think, working with others. Just general communication and dialogue and just working  
372 with the children and the staff. I think just that general.....I think the staff are very good at  
373 questioning what they're doing and getting the children to reflect and explain what they're  
374 doing. So I think from some of the observations I read, from the observation stuff, it's really  
375 interesting when they've asked L questions and she's explained. You know, when  
376 something's going on at home, here. We went to Australia, which was an amazing  
377 opportunity and great for L and we went in some caves and she had new words of stalagmites  
378 and stalactites and she was very proud and C (practitioner) said she was very impressed that  
379 she remembered those words and got them in order and was able to tell her why she'd seen  
380 them. And again, and now she's watching Go-Jetters and they were doing that, and Fireman  
381 Sam had them and she said I've seen them in Australia.  
382  
383 I - So she knows the context as well!  
384  
385 R - Yeah. She knows the context and that just demonstrates that then she can understand  
386 other things in other environments, that she has seen and relates elsewhere. And she's learnt  
387 new words. Like we've got the globe now, so when we went to Australia we took it with us  
388 so we could show her where we were travelling to and where family now live. And that  
389 wider sense of, we live in different places. We had some guests over from America, so we  
390 were showing her on the map where they live. And daddy went to Germany, he went to  
391 France, so we get the globe out and we talk about the countries.  
392  
393 *L enters the room*  
394  
395 L - Mum my tummy hurts.

396  
397 R - Does it? Well you have eaten quite a lot tonight haven't you?  
398  
399 I - Do you think it was that chocolate cake?  
400  
401 R - It could well be. Do you need to go to the toilet? Do you need to go to the toilet? If you  
402 go and watch TV for a minute. I'm just talking to Tanya.  
403  
404 I - I'm nearly finished! You've been a superstar!  
405  
406 R - So I think the outdoor environment really, but talking with children. I think the staff and  
407 their questioning is really important and getting the children to reflect and relate what they're  
408 doing. I think just encouraging new words and giving the children new vocabulary and  
409 explaining.  
410  
411 I - Do you think you need the resources in these environments in order to do that?  
412  
413 R - Yes, definitely.  
414  
415 I - From what you were saying about stalagmites and stalactites being more relevant because  
416 she saw them? So you need those resources to help those?  
417  
418 R - Yes, that's right and I think with pictures and words as well. Now we're starting to...not  
419 read but understanding that words mean something, and letters mean things, having the  
420 picture, the word. When it's a new environment or new, introducing new things, whether it  
421 be an outdoor world or indoor, I think that's really... seeing the text as well. Yeah, I think  
422 that's really important. And she, L recognises that. Although she says I can't read that yet  
423 but what does that say? So we're now getting her to spell out the letters and the sounds, that  
424 she can see that it mean things.  
425  
426 I - She is so clever!  
427  
428 R - She is doing alright actually. I think, and getting her to write as well and just like...  
429  
430 I - When's her birthday?  
431  
432 R - It's gone. Four. She was four in January.  
433  
434 I - January.  
435  
436 R - So she's writing her name and, and we're learning how to colouring with her. So she has  
437 had some pallet paints. She got a little pallet box of paints and she loves mixing them and  
438 painting and she is now writing and writing her name but wanting to write other people's  
439 names and...  
440  
441 I - That's good!  
442  
443 R - So that's good by the time she goes to school shall be completely ready.  
444  
445 I - Yes. She'll be fine! They'll put her straight into year one!! (*laughter*)

446  
 447 R – But I think resources are important as I think you need to support that  
 448  
 449 I – Yeah!  
 450  
 451 R – Okay?  
 452  
 453 I – Yes! Thank you! Couple more questions. We’re nearly there? OK?  
 454  
 455 R – Yes.  
 456  
 457 I – So you’re going to design the perfect environment to promote speech and language  
 458 development. What are the three most important things?  
 459  
 460 R - I think... I think having the resources so like paper, pens, colours, that allow exploration.  
 461 I think creativity for me with language, it’s really important, and L talks about the things that  
 462 she’s doing and she is capturing and creating and it might be gluing, it might be sticking  
 463 things that we’ve collected and then having the resources, so the pictures and the photos of  
 464 things and the words.  
 465  
 466 I – Is that the second thing or is that one within your resources category?  
 467  
 468 R - Good question! Let’s put it in the resources category because if not I’m going to run out!  
 469 *(laughter)* So I think those physical sorts, those creativity things. I then think there’s the  
 470 infrastructure around that. So I think you have to set the right scene. I think if it’s dark and  
 471 dingy and not comfortable and enclosed.  
 472  
 473 I - So you’re talking very much about an indoor environment here!  
 474  
 475 R - I suppose I am.  
 476  
 477 I - Is that your perfect environment? That’s fine - it’s fine if it is!  
 478  
 479 R – I would like to see a bit of free flow actually. A bit of indoor, a bit of outdoor, I think.  
 480 If it could be perfect I think there would be an opportunity for children to move between the  
 481 two, having some areas which clearly can’t be outdoor because they need to be...like books,  
 482 although books can be outdoors, but having an area where it’s inside but then they can move  
 483 to outdoors with free will. I think that would be... and having, I think physical things as well  
 484 to play. So I think the physical environment, with the play, if that makes sense. So having  
 485 trucks and bicycles and physical ride on stuff  
 486  
 487 I – Right yes. To promote the physical movement?  
 488  
 489 R - Yes I think actually... that’s why I think outdoor environment works well because it  
 490 allows more physicality. I think physicality is that real exploration and I think that works for  
 491 both boys and girls.  
 492  
 493 I – And do you think that helps speech and language?  
 494

495 R – Yes, it does. I think so, yeah, and I think different children have different ways of  
 496 exploring that and, and relate to in different ways. L has both. She likes creativity and the  
 497 physicality and we get both sides from her in that environment so I think having that physical  
 498 environment....and the things to do for more physical things but I think creativity and  
 499 resources inside. I would just suggest the general layout. I think that layout then, to  
 500 encourage the environment I think .....Oh but I think the staff are really important.  
 501  
 502 I – Well the layout, you could argue, comes under your infrastructure!  
 503  
 504 R – Yes! So I think having the people to promote and support that...  
 505  
 506 *The phone rings*  
 507  
 508 I – Please, if you want to get the phone, I don't mind!  
 509  
 510 *R takes call*  
 511  
 512 R - So I think the staff I think, really help that though because if they didn't have that, then  
 513 the children would be on their own and they'd have no interaction and you do see that at  
 514 times when, you know, where children really engage with certain members of staff because  
 515 they give them that feedback, and have high quality conversations.  
 516  
 517 I – Yes.  
 518  
 519 R – L though is, is....she can be a bit of a devil at times and she works people out. Good or  
 520 bad! She can be a bit of a minx and C (practitioner) has sussed her and she's great but B  
 521 (practitioner), bless her, L drives her mad! And I know she does and I know when B's in  
 522 charge, then she's had a bad day (*laughter*) But she can be just a monkey (*laughter*) and she,  
 523 she also leads others astray. So she, she's very good at getting to persuade others to do what  
 524 she wants. So ....  
 525  
 526 I - That's a skill!  
 527  
 528 R – Yes, I know. It's leadership, I know but not necessarily in a positive way. So there's  
 529 been a few incidences where L has been instigating things that weren't the right things to do  
 530 and a few of the other girls, who, they are all friends together, and they will be, up to no  
 531 good, shall we say, and instigation was L! So clearly, communication and I think L benefits  
 532 from being an only child because to hear her language, you know, well we talk to her in  
 533 normal conversations and explain things to her all the time so I don't tend to, I don't really  
 534 talk baby language to her and I think that is a big difference. So her language has always  
 535 been good. But I think she's got good auditory memory and listens. I think....  
 536  
 537 L comes into the room to see what is happening.  
 538  
 539 I - I've got one more question to ask mummy! A really quick one! Last question! What  
 540 does a quality environment feel like to you? So you know when you walk into a house and  
 541 you say it just feels right, what does that make you feel? How does that feel?  
 542  
 543 R - I think comfortable. I think, and calm but I think there's ....you get a sense that it's not,  
 544 it's not shouty....



545 I – To L. You can write you name on my paper of you like. *L starts writing.*  
546  
547 R – I think you get a sense that it's not, I think you can hear that there's some good dialogue  
548 happening with the children and that they're talking well to each other. I think you do get  
549 anger, you're bound to, they're trying to work out their emotions at that age anyway but I  
550 think that the staff equally have... are managing that environment in a constructive way.  
551  
552 *L presents her writing!*  
553  
554 I – Fantastic!  
555  
556 *Speaking to R again*  
557  
558 I – So does that make you feel comfortable?  
559  
560 R - I think so! I think so because I think then you feel happy to leave your child there.  
561  
562 L – Mummy! I saw something very dangerous in the lounge!!  
563  
564 R – Did you? What did you see? (*goes to check*) Oh no that's just black bits. It's just soot,  
565 it's soot. Bless her. We've got an open fire. It's probably all on fire in there!! Yes – so I  
566 think that comfortable environment is very important, And I think both preschool and A are  
567 very different. Preschool is a lot freer with a bigger environment which L loves. It allows  
568 free play much more, whereas I think A has more structured environment but they're on top  
569 of each other a bit more. But I think that forces actually some good negotiation.  
570  
571 I - And do you feel comfortable in both of those environments?  
572  
573 R – Yeah. Yeah I do actually and I feel happy that they get out a lot more at A. I think that's  
574 important. And that they have a preschool and in some ways I think L needs both and I think  
575 five days a week was almost a bit too much actually in that environment and if I could be  
576 prescriptive for A, I wish they had a bit more of a freer environment, outside, right next to  
577 them where the children could break out into. I think that would be the ideal environment  
578 for me.  
579  
580 I – Definitely.  
581  
582 R - Whereas preschool has a bit of that but it's a bigger, freer environment so having two  
583 days there and two days at A, actually she gets the best of both worlds.  
584  
585 I – Yes.  
586  
587 R - So I think that suits L really well.  
588  
589 I – Yeah.  
590  
591 R - But I also love that she has forest school, so, and at preschool they don't do that and A  
592 does. So she gets a bit of that as well and then we have a free day on a Friday where I'm at  
593 home and we do swimming, and we're able to get to all the other things that potentially she

594 doesn't get. So it's just trying to get that mix isn't it? And that's what I think is really  
595 important, is that mixture so....Has that helped?  
596  
597 I – Fantastic! Thank you so much! That's brilliant!  
598  
599  
600

1 **Phase One - Setting Three - Parent Interview. (PA1, S3)**

2 Role – Parent of child in preschool room. 3 ½ year old boy (C). Goes to school in  
3 September – has two older boys who also used to attend this setting.

4 I = interviewer

5 R = respondent

6

7

8 I - So first of all what I would like you to do please, is define for me, say I'm an alien  
9 plonking down onto this planet and I know nothing about what an indoor classroom is. So in  
10 your, you know, what your definition of it is, what an outdoor classroom is and then what a  
11 natural environment type Forest School is. Separating out the three.

12

13 R – What based on this school?

14

15 I – Yes and the general experience that you've had.

16

17 R – Right ok. Well an indoor .....play areas with dinosaurs and stuff like that. I came in here  
18 the other day and there were blocks of wood and pieces of paper around it and there was a  
19 girl there straight away, just drawing shapes. It was really nice to see. She'd come in earlier  
20 and got onto it straight away. It was really good.

21

22 I - So lots of resources? Lots of stuff out?

23

24 R - Yeah um different, lots of different stuff. Just say like a couple of cushions on the floor, a  
25 couple of books. It's just whatever they want to do. They don't understand that it's the  
26 shapes and stuff, that they don't think they're actually doing shapes.

27

28 I – They're learning.

29

30 R – They're learning, yeah. It's really good how they work it.

31

32 I- Yeah, brilliant. So that's an indoor classroom. What about an outdoor classroom?

33

34 R – Mud! They love it here!

35

36 I – So dirty?!

37

38 R – Yeah, very dirty!

39

40 I - So it if your child goes and plays in the outside space, do they also go to Forest School?

41

42 R – Yeah

43

44 I – Yeah.

45

46 R – There's lots of things.

47

48 I – Yes, so let's do the outdoor bit first then, so mud?  
49  
50 R – Yeah, lots of mud! Lots of sand in the car from out their wellies! (laughter) He is taking  
51 his wellies off and I'm like no, not know please! Um, like the trees, they can just play with  
52 the sticks the trees are there are.....  
53  
54 I - So more natural resources?  
55  
56 R - Yeah and then they've got all the diggers, they've been set in the sand for them to play  
57 with there so....  
58  
59 I – Yes. So there's still toys?  
60  
61 R – Yeah, the toys are there just to sit and play with.  
62  
63 I – Brilliant! And then forest school?  
64  
65 R - Forest school, They love going out into the woods. Absolutely love it. They have a.....  
66  
67 I - So how would you define that? What make is that different from that outdoor mud and  
68 sand bit?  
69  
70 R - A bit more out in the open and, I don't know. Like here, everything is there but it's all  
71 still closed in but when they get out there it's just they can do whatever they like.  
72  
73 I – Yeah. Lovely. So can you tell me what you think is a quality indoor environment? So  
74 you've kind of defined it for me but what makes it quality? We'll go through the three again.  
75  
76 R - Right okay. I'd just say, just the, the range of stuff.  
77  
78 I - The variety?  
79  
80 R – Yeah, the variety of everything that's there and it's not just one thing, you've all got to  
81 do it. It's something for everybody....  
82  
83 I – That....that kind of goes with their interests?  
84  
85 R - Yes every child is different. Obviously but there is always something for everybody.  
86  
87 I – Lovely. And quality outdoor?  
88  
89 R - I think just the same to be honest. Um, even the caravan outside and they can just go and  
90 dress up, with everything that's in there, they've got like, there's just something for  
91 everybody. If they don't want to go into the mud, they've got the dry bits. They've got the  
92 caravan. They've got the shelters. It's just everything.  
93  
94 I - And what makes a quality Forest School?  
95  
96 R – With C being such an outdoor child, it's. it's great so when he comes home he's got no  
97 worries with getting his wellies on and going for a walk with the dog. It's, it just gives him

98 that freedom. (*interrupted by a child who decided to come into the room and see what we*  
99 *were doing*)  
100  
101 I - So the quality natural environment? So to go to a woodland or a field what would make  
102 that good? Compare to ..... a rubbish environment!  
103  
104 R - I think it's just the freedom of being out there. You can see everything that's in the back  
105 garden has been bought in for them but everything is out there, it's the same but bigger.  
106  
107 I - And it's naturally occurring?  
108  
109 R - Yes, it's not man-made like the back garden. It's all natural. It's not too much different  
110 for them because they're used to it but it's, it's in it for real.  
111  
112 I - Yeas. Thank you. So, can you tell me then how you think these environments help  
113 speech and language development?  
114  
115 R - Well the older two they've got on here great and they're doing very well at school but C's  
116 got a stutter, a stammer, and it's and it's not a regular one it just comes and goes as it pleases  
117 and it's been gone just before Christmas. It's been gone for a while until yesterday but it's....  
118 the distance is getting a lot bigger and it's not lasting as long. So I can't put a pinpoint on  
119 anything, what it can be and what started it so, and that's slowed his speech down quite a lot.  
120 It got where the other two were talking for him and a lot of the children were talking for him  
121 and if he couldn't get his sentence out, then they'd just be like we'll just leave him but now  
122 they know and they will just sit and wait for him to finish his sentence. So it's....  
123  
124 I - Have you noticed a difference in different environments, when he's playing with different  
125 things?  
126  
127 R - Um it's more when he's more excited and tries to rush his sentence. That's one of his big  
128 problems but that's not a pinpoint on what it is because it does vary a lot. But his speech has  
129 come on. Going from having two children that were very forward and then having C it was a  
130 bit like oh I wasn't expecting this and it has been a bit of an eye opener to see how things,  
131 how different things can help him. Just, by having the freedom here and at home we're very  
132 much an outdoor family as well and he does love, he loves being outdoors.  
133  
134 I - What do you think about, is it about the outdoors that you know, makes him talk?  
135  
136 R - I don't know. I have no idea. I think it's just being out and letting loose. Just doing what  
137 you want to do. To a certain extent.  
138  
139 I - Yeah, I know what you mean. (laughter)  
140  
141 R - But, um, they do sounds here. There doing feelings at the moment, this week.  
142  
143 I - I heard them talking about that!  
144  
145 R - So C came home the other day. They had different pots and he had an altercation with his  
146 brother last night and C pinched him and I said how do you think that made him feel and he  
147 said sad and I was like you know all this cause you're doing it at school and then we went on

148 to his school and what he was doing and he said I chose the happy pot and I was like why  
149 was you happy because I was sat with my friends. So he knows, he knows about his feelings  
150 and he knows that he made his brother feel sad. So it was nice link and a nice conversation  
151 last night and it's great that we could do that.  
152  
153 I – They don't often remember what they've done in the day do they?  
154  
155 R – No. No, they don't. They can forget. It does take him a while, so what have you done  
156 today when you walk out the gates and you get nothing.  
157  
158 I – Nothing, yeah.  
159  
160 R - It does take him a while to actually I done this today because he's remembered it.  
161  
162 I - Does he tell you about certain areas more than others?  
163  
164 R – Outside! He's outside constantly. I can imagine him being out there now. He loves  
165 carpet time. Before Christmas he told us about his favourite book that they do on carpet time  
166 so I bought him that for Christmas and he was like, as soon as he opened it he loved it. He  
167 loves yoga and relaxation and he tries to do his standing balance tree at home all the time and  
168 he'll say I can't do it but he actually can do it.  
169  
170 I – Yeah. But he talks more about, more outside stuff?  
171  
172 R – Yeah, yeah. He loves the tool shed. He loves the stuff like that.  
173  
174 I - And he tells you a lot about that?  
175  
176 R – Yes, yeah and he comes home and he wants to hammer straight away! (laughter) So I  
177 say, no not today!  
178  
179 I - So do you find that he does that more than any of the things that he'd have done inside  
180 then?  
181  
182 R – Um he tends to do, to go out a lot more and I've noticed, I see when they put on the  
183 website a lot of them are inside as well. He doesn't tend to talk about that as much. He does,  
184 he tends to talk about the outdoors a lot more but yeah he loves the relaxation and the yoga!  
185  
186 I - Who wouldn't though!  
187  
188 R - Yeah he'll come home covered in paint and I'll be like have you been painting today, no,  
189 so has someone else painted you then? (laughter) And then often it'll be afterwards he'll be  
190 like Oh I did this picture and it will be either in his drawer or his folder..  
191  
192 I – Right, yes. It's often at bedtime isn't it they decide to tell you.  
193  
194 R – It is yeah. Stalling! Yeah I don't wanna go to bed let's.... (laughter)  
195  
196 I - So what do you think then is needed within the environment to help children's speech and  
197 language?

198  
199 R - I don't know because he's getting on so well and to see how much he has improved.  
200 Whether it's just being here or he would have improved himself anyway but it's proving  
201 that...  
202  
203 I - You talked about books!  
204  
205 R - Yeah, he loves books! Books yeah definitely books. Um, you know they have things all  
206 around the walls, like numbers and stuff like that. And....we do sit and do numbers but he'll  
207 come home and he's learnt a new number, and a new letter, and he knew how to write it.  
208 And I'm like how did you do that and he probably won't remember that he'd sat down and  
209 done letters or numbers but yet he knows that that's the next one so...  
210  
211 I - So visual prompts?  
212  
213 R - Yeah, definitely.  
214  
215 I - Things that around for the room and .....  
216  
217 R - Yeah and you don't actually notice that it's there but they know. It's like if they wanted  
218 to look for a number they'll probably find it there but otherwise they don't notice it do they?  
219 So a lot of things around.  
220  
221 I - It's that variety.  
222  
223 R - Yeah  
224  
225 I- Yeah, brilliant. So if you are going to design the perfect environment to help children's  
226 speech and language, what three things would you think were the most important to put in it?  
227 This is your opinion.  
228  
229 R - Um, I think, like different materials. Like things we can feel and see cos that will, I think  
230 that helps them.  
231  
232 I - Sensory stuff?  
233  
234 R - Yeah, definitely. So I'd not seen this before (talking about the sensory room in which the  
235 interview is being conducted in) but I think it's great!  
236  
237 I - Whether it would want to make you talk though? It would probably just make you want  
238 to come in here and chill wouldn't it?  
239  
240 R - Yeah maybe, and then it would probably follow.  
241  
242 I - So lots of different materials, what else? Your three most important things?  
243  
244 R - I think having time to talk. Like to sit and look at stories, just to talk about your feelings  
245 and how..... just have chance to have a conversation with your friends, with your teacher,  
246 with a group. I don't know I think the freedom is a big thing as well so maybe an out....  
247

248 I - An outside space?  
249  
250 R - Yes. To go outdoors and to have snack time and things, they'll probably just sit and talk  
251 then, just being out running, running around.  
252  
253 I - So lots of materials, time to talk and freedom of the outside space?  
254  
255 R - Yeah!  
256  
257 I - Yeah okay. That's brilliant, thank you. Last question, you'll be pleased to know. What  
258 does the quality environment feel like to you? So, if for example you know when people go  
259 and look round a house, if they're looking to move, they walk through the door and they say  
260 it just feels right. Parents say it as well when they come through the nursery doors. Actually  
261 I have chosen to bring my child here because it just felt right. What does that feel like to  
262 you? What does that make you feel?  
263  
264 R - The staff I think. The staff are amazing here. They've always got time for you regardless  
265 of how little it is. If you are looking for a glove or a sock which I do a lot!  
266  
267 I - Or a Lego brick or something!!!  
268  
269 R - But they're always, I'll go and look for it or can I look for it and come back for you  
270 tomorrow? It's always .....They're not it's just a sock, it is.....  
271  
272 I - Yeah. They make you feel important?  
273  
274 R - Yes. And the children! C talks about his teachers all the time especially, like the new  
275 ones that come he tends to go to them, because it's a new face, he loves it. And just how  
276 much effort they put in with the children and that I think that makes....  
277  
278 I - And that makes you feel?  
279  
280 R - Brilliant! Like I've come in today and I've spoke to O (practitioner) straightaway and he  
281 said C had a great day yesterday and he was just, he was doing different things which, and  
282 I've already seen the photos because they upload the photos all throughout the day, so when  
283 I'm at work and I'm on a break I can have a quick look and there is a photo of him carrying a  
284 log, then I know he's having a great day. I don't worry about him. He loves it so...  
285  
286 I - So it makes you feel brilliant, it makes you feel safe?  
287  
288 R - Yeah! Yeah, I know he's very safe when he's here. I've got no worries and if there is  
289 anything, you fill the accident form out quite a lot (laughter)  
290  
291 I - Yeah but you'd probably be a bit worried if you didn't!  
292  
293 R - Yes and it'll just be a bumped finger or a bumped head and if it's anything else then they  
294 ring you. You just know, if he comes home and says I've got a cut, then where is that from, I  
295 don't know nothing about that, then there's things to worry but they're straight there with,  
296 with everything. I think they've got it right under wraps here! (laughter)  
297



298 I – Fantastic! Thank you so much. Thank you for taking time out of your day.  
299  
300  
301

1 Phase One - Setting Three - Parent Interview. (PA2, S3)

2 Role – Parent of twins in preschool room. 3 ½ year old boys. Go to school in September.

3 No siblings.

4

5 I = interviewer

6 R = respondent

7

8

9 I - So I'm going to ask you, first of all, can you define for me what you think is an indoor

10 classroom, an outdoor classroom and a natural environment, like a forest school type of

11 thing? So looking at the three different environments, imagine I know nothing about any of

12 these environments! I'm an alien plonked down on earth. How would you describe to me an

13 indoor classroom?

14

15 R - So it's staying indoors. Probably in one room. Structured.

16

17 I - What would be in it?

18

19 R - Plastic toys. Plastic toys, tables and chairs....

20

21 I - And an outdoor classroom?

22

23 R - Would be treehouses, natural stuff like, they use tyres for climbing on. They use planks

24 outside, mud kitchens, garden veg so there'd be just anything outside.

25

26 I – Would there be toys out there?

27

28 R - Yeah I think. For digging.

29

30 I - Okay and then the natural environment? The forest school?

31

32 R - It's a bit of both. It's probably a bit of the indoor and the outdoor one. So, the door is

33 always open from the classroom so they're not contained. They've got the option to go in or

34 out. They use a lot of natural products. They make things from....

35

36 I – mud! (laughter)

37

38 R – Yeah! They come home with all sorts!! Clay! They go out to the forest. They make

39 fires. They use hammers, drills, things that would give me a heart attack! (laughter)

40

41 I - So more risky?

42

43 R – Yeah! Yeah they take more risks and they give the children more independence.

44 Different options. Not just being stuck playing with toys that they play with at home. It's

45 something different for them to ....

46

47 I – So would you say it's more freedom?

48  
49 R – I do yeah.  
50  
51 I – Okay. So with regards to playing and learning can you tell me what you think is a quality  
52 indoor environment, outdoor environment and natural environment? So you chose this  
53 nursery for your children....  
54  
55 R - I did yeah because I thought it's different and we looked at other nurseries where they  
56 were just stuck in a classroom and it's, they said we've got a timetable and we stick to this,  
57 stick to this, stick to this. They sit at a table and then we went in there and they were all  
58 sitting round a table. They were quiet, they were painting and we didn't like it. We just  
59 thought it's okay but they can do that at home and we thought it would benefit them and  
60 they'd have more quality of life to be outside, doing different stuff.  
61  
62 I - So what makes this quality? What makes this indoor space, for example, first of all,  
63 quality?  
64  
65 R - I don't know. Probably the kids have made a lot of stuff that they use.  
66  
67 I – There's a lot of stuff!  
68  
69 R - Yeah there's lots of different stuff.  
70  
71 I – So would you say you need that for it to be quality? That variety?  
72  
73 R – Yeah! The different stuff, the variety! Sorry – my brains gone!  
74  
75 I - No that's fine. Absolutely fine. Okay. Could you tell me how you think these different  
76 environments help speech and language development?  
77  
78 R - Because they learn about different things that they use that they wouldn't normally use.  
79 So if they used a saw...it's different things, they've done different things. When they come  
80 home and you're just like oh how do you know about that? And it does bring it on. I mean,  
81 my two are deaf so they have speech and language issues anyway.  
82  
83 I – Do they have hearing aids?  
84  
85 R – One has hearing aids and one's got cochlear implants and speech and language is quite  
86 important to us anyway.  
87  
88 I – Yes.  
89  
90 R - I think for us, we like to hear cos they're not stuck. They've got a choice cos when  
91 you're stuck in a room, it can be really noisy and it's too noisy for them. So especially for  
92 my two, they get overwhelmed by too much noise so they can go outside, they can go to the,  
93 they've got a little caravan, they call it. They can go and have the quiet time. They can come  
94 in here (sensory room) for the quiet time. So for us that's really important. But then it was  
95 important for us because there was a different variety of children's ages. So you've got some  
96 that are behind on their speech and you've got some that are really advanced so they probably  
97 help bring them on.

98  
99 I - So that, mixed age groups helps?  
100  
101 R - Yeah, it does.  
102  
103 I - Fantastic, thank you. So what things do you think are necessary within the environment  
104 to help speech and language development then? I think you started to touch on that. So quiet  
105 spaces....  
106  
107 R - Yeah they need the quiet time. They split off into small groups which helps. They also  
108 have carpet time, which is really important. And they do meditation, yoga and they know it's  
109 got to be quiet. What was the question again?  
110  
111 I - What elements are essential to promote speech and language?  
112  
113 R - It's the right staff as well. That the staff are communicating with the children. Perhaps  
114 they are going into more depth, asking them why they are doing something while they are  
115 doing it. For them to explain.  
116  
117 I - Yeah. So extending?  
118  
119 R - Yeah!  
120  
121 I - Fantastic! So if you were going to design the perfect environment to help speech and  
122 language development, what would your three top things be that you wanted to be in it?  
123 What would it be like?  
124  
125 R - I suppose from our point of view it would be that it's got good acoustics. Usually it's  
126 carpet, curtains, low ceilings, not a big room. Probably now you can't say in a preschool not  
127 to be so noisy cos it's..... but it would be that breaking off, ensuring they've got quiet time.  
128  
129 I - Good acoustics, quiet times ....  
130  
131 R - Yeah. What was the question again?  
132  
133 I - The three most important things if you were going to design the perfect environment?  
134  
135 R - Probably that they've got the right tools to learn with as well.  
136  
137 I - What do you mean by that?  
138  
139 R - Like here, they've got different stuff that they use so it encourages them to ask questions  
140 cos obviously they don't know half the stuff they do. So what's that and it encourages them  
141 to ask those questions, to listen, to see what it is....  
142  
143 I - To prompt?  
144  
145 R - Yeah. To ask those questions. Of why. Why do we do that? Otherwise you would just  
146 get on with it and not ask those questions.  
147

148 I – Fantastic. Thank you. Last question, then. What does a quality environment feel like to  
149 you? So you know, when, quite often people go and look around a house and quite often they  
150 walk through the door and just say it feels right?  
151  
152 R – Yeah.  
153  
154 I – How does that make you feel if it's the right quality?  
155  
156 R - We feel happy and comfortable to know that we've left them in a safe, safe environment  
157 where our children are happy to come and we have no tears or tantrums. They are happy to  
158 walk through the door...so yeah!  
159  
160 I – Fantastic. Great. Thank you so much. Thank you.  
161  
162  
163

1    **Phase One - Setting Three – Practitioner Interview. (PA3, S3)**

2    Role – Director and manager of setting.

3

4    I = interviewer

5    R = respondent

6    I - So what I'm asking first of all, if you could define for me your idea of an indoor

7    classroom, an outdoor classroom and the natural environment. As the three different

8    components.

9

10   R - You want me to talk about it?

11

12   I – Yeah. Imagine I'm in alien and I know nothing about any of those things. How would

13   you explain it to me? Your own definition of an indoor classroom?

14

15   R - When I think of an indoor classroom, they're quite linked to each other and it should be a

16   continuum and there should be a flow between the two environments.

17

18   I – Between the two? What the indoor and the outdoor?

19

20   R – Yeah. Yeah and I'm going to combine it altogether because I think it's really hard, if you

21   are doing it right to do to distinguish between the three.

22

23   I – Yeah

24

25   R – And natural is exactly that. Nature. Children are connected to nature and natural objects

26   and I think that the natural part of it is just the unlimited amount of imagination and resources

27   the children have just allows it's important that all those three, those areas just allows for a

28   continuous flow. That's how I see it.

29

30   I - So in your mind there isn't a definite...

31

32   R - There's no difference. There shouldn't be a defined area it should just be one continuum

33   where, where it flows basically. In my view, that's my vision.

34

35   I - Thank you. So if we look at those, and we can again link them all together if you want to,

36   can you tell me what you constitutes a quality environment; indoor, outdoor and natural

37   environment?

38

39   R – So quality?

40

41   I – Yes. What makes it quality?

42

43   R – So first of all, freedom for children.

44

45   I - Is this all of them?

46

47 R – Yes, all of them together. Something that reflects who the children are and what they're  
 48 doing. We can't decide that. They decide that. And quality is where adults facilitate that for  
 49 them, because I think children are natural learners. I think it's there for all of them and I  
 50 think they just need the adults to facilitate really. So taking a back role. The adults are  
 51 taking a back role and allowing the children to, to, to almost research. I think it's a high-  
 52 level research the children do.  
 53  
 54 I – Adults, in order to facilitate, need to put the resources into those don't they?  
 55  
 56 R – That's what they do. Yeah, yeah. They need to supply the resources.  
 57  
 58 I – And are they any different in different environments?  
 59  
 60 R – No. No, I just think if any, any, I just think it should just be, just one, it's just one big  
 61 store cupboard. (laughter) I just don't know why people say, you don't need to, I think you  
 62 don't need to actually buy, it's how you move stuff around.  
 63  
 64 I – Okay  
 65  
 66 R – And how things develop. You know I think we quickly get rid of things instead of leave  
 67 it there and see how it ages, and how it moves around. They described our garden on Friday  
 68 as an urban forest and I quite like that.  
 69  
 70 I – An urban forest? How gorgeous!  
 71  
 72 R – Yeah, yeah and I quite like that. So I don't, I think, I think nature takes the lead  
 73 whatever. I don't think you have to, I think you just have to go with it. If you can accept it,  
 74 just go with it. You don't need to provide a lot with nature. Indoors obviously, you do. It's  
 75 more, there is more that you need to support them with but I think we could take them to the  
 76 woods are not need anything. That's my view.  
 77  
 78 I – Yeah.  
 79  
 80 R – Yeah. So quality for me it's adults with skill and knowledge. Looking at the adults skill  
 81 and knowledge of sort of how the children, how do they enable children to do, to carry out  
 82 their learning? I think sometimes children get stuck and that's when an adult needs to  
 83 facilitate or provide them with something or suggest something and I think, so a lot of it's  
 84 language, especially at this age. And then if you're talking about babies then it's not, it's just  
 85 about being there without the language and just chattering and sort of supporting them  
 86 alongside what they're doing. But I do think, even with the babies they are as competent.  
 87 Children are competent learners without us.  
 88  
 89 I – So how are we going to encourage their speech and language then?  
 90  
 91 R – Outside?  
 92  
 93 I – How do these environments help speech and language?  
 94  
 95 R – Well from babies we chatter away, we talk, we provide a language rich environment.  
 96

97 I - What is that, in your view?  
 98  
 99 R - In my view it's respect. It's talking on a level. We don't, as I'm talking to you now is  
 100 how I would talk to a child. We, we question. We suggest.  
 101  
 102 I - So are you saying then, that in the environment all you need is an adult, nothing else?  
 103  
 104 R - I think if you've got a skilled adult and an outdoor environment....  
 105  
 106 I - Then the resources are there?  
 107  
 108 R - You don't need anything else, not at all.  
 109  
 110 I - Says you, with this massive big store cupboard!!  
 111  
 112 R - Yeah I know but I do agree that we go to the woods with nothing and a lot of the learning  
 113 outside, you don't take stuff with you, do you? You just take your adults who have the  
 114 knowledge and the skills to share with the children and I think it's in the outdoors where  
 115 children are more willing. When you take away all this clutter they are more willing to talk  
 116 about it. Because they know. It's something that they know.  
 117  
 118 I - Do you need the clutter to help the language development?  
 119  
 120 R - Indoors? No, I don't think you do. I still feel like the clutter is just a bank of resources,  
 121 or a bank of things, objects, that the children desire and like. So often here, I don't know  
 122 whether you've noticed, it's lots of their work around so it's stuff that, it's things that  
 123 they've made that they want to keep.  
 124  
 125 I - Things that take pride in?  
 126  
 127 R - Yeah. They want to keep and they find beautiful and have put a lot of work into it or it's  
 128 collaborative so they've worked on it as a whole. I think as adults we're quick to move on  
 129 and children don't, don't need that. So that's what I feel.  
 130  
 131 I - Fantastic. So what do you think, what elements do you think are essential to promote  
 132 speech and language development?  
 133  
 134 R - I think good role models. Use of language. But I also think silent and present is really  
 135 important. Children need opportunities and I think we speak for children a lot. So a good  
 136 listener is really important and good observational skills, without a doubt about. If they can't  
 137 see it and hear it, there's a problem I think. Yeah. And mutual respect. I think children need  
 138 time to be quiet, you know just because they're quiet doesn't mean to say they're not thinking  
 139 or that it's not going to come.  
 140  
 141 I - And you've talked about space?  
 142  
 143 R - Space. They need space for freedom. Yeah.  
 144  
 145 I - So you're going to design the perfect environment to promote speech and language  
 146 development. What are your three most important things?



147  
148 R - Indoors or outdoors or anywhere?  
149  
150 I – Anywhere!  
151  
152 R - So for language development, it will be outside. Out in the garden. Something physical.  
153 Imaginative resources and skilled staff.  
154  
155 I – So last question. What does a quality environment feel like to you? That intrinsic thing?  
156 So for example people go to look round houses they walk through the door of a new home  
157 and they say it just feels right. We could live here, this just feels right.  
158  
159 R – It feels like that for children. It feels like a child's voice. It just feels like, children. It  
160 feels like a lived in, used, mucky, creative space and you walk in and think, ah the children,  
161 their wellbeing must be so high because,  
162  
163 I - Does that make your well-being high?  
164  
165 R - Yes totally, Totally, yeah. I think it does, knowing that you're making a difference.  
166 Definitely.  
167  
168 I - Thank you very much. Thank you  
169  
170

1 **Phase One - Setting Three - Practitioner Interview. (PA4, S3)**

2 Role – Deputy manager of the whole setting. Been here seven years. Halfway through  
3 Forest School training. Male practitioner  
4

5 I = interviewer

6 R = respondent

7  
8  
9 I - First of all what I'd like to ask you, is can you please define for me what you think an  
10 indoor classroom is, an outdoor classroom is and a natural environment? What is your take  
11 on those areas?  
12

13 R - Well for me really the indoor and the outdoor classroom, there shouldn't be a distinction.  
14 It should just be one environment for the children learning because the doors open all the  
15 time and the children are free to access what they need during that, those session times.  
16 Experiences should be child led or certainly, will hopefully be inspired by the child's ideas  
17 and retrospectively planned rather than planning in advance. And staff are trained properly to  
18 be able to pick up the links that they need to, to get other educational ideas into the children's  
19 play.  
20

21 I - If I knew nothing about these environments what would I, if I was going to set it up and  
22 knew nothing about it, what would you tell me I needed to put in it?  
23

24 R - Well when I talk to the staff about their ideas and bringing ideas in, I always, if you've  
25 got a process that's fine. So if you've got a process that you want the children to do, which  
26 is, you know, always going to be connected with the curriculum. So whether it's exploring  
27 dry materials or sensory materials or you might be thinking about weaving but from an aspect  
28 of fine motor control rather than an idea, if you see what I mean. I think all the ideas have to  
29 come from the children and sometimes if we put a process led experience in, that will bring  
30 ideas from the children so that's how I see it. Not be tokenistic in, like I think a lot of,  
31 certainly a lot of my practitioners will look on Pinterest and say ooh can we do this and I'll  
32 say well you have to store it in the back of your head and when you're in a situation where  
33 the children are doing something where that thing you've seen links in, then you could use it  
34 as a suggestion or try and get it into sustained shared thinking, where you're just adding a  
35 couple of bits of those materials and see where the children lead. But their ideas are always  
36 more important than ours. And the idea of having an end product is never necessarily a good  
37 thing. You've just got to treat things as a process. So I'd say you need the right resources.  
38 Children need to be a....  
39

40 I – Is this to make it quality?  
41

42 R – Yeah. They need to be able to access a wide range of resources indoors and outdoors.  
43 Some of those resources need to be the same, so you still need wood, stone, natural resources  
44 inside, particularly for the children who don't naturally want to go out. You can't force a  
45 child to go outside. You can encourage them but they might do something inside with those  
46 natural materials and inspire something in the garden and vice versa something outside my

47 inspire something inside. So you need loose parts, loose resources, things that children can  
 48 put together easily. So in our garden.....

49

50 I – Transportable?

51

52 R – Yeah, transportable. So we've got planks, bricks, stones, crates and then I don't think  
 53 you have to fall into definition of educational approaches, like Steiner would want you to end  
 54 up with, you know. Reggio would want you to have something else and you've got to take a  
 55 mix of that because children....I always see us as the secondary educators and children come  
 56 from home with their experiences and they have to be able to use what they have at home to  
 57 show you what they can do and what their ideas are. So you need a bit of, I know plastic toys  
 58 aren't necessarily what everybody wants but you have to have an element of those because  
 59 children know what they are and..

60

61 I – Yes. Like their superheroes!

62

63 R – Yes. So we've got dressing up resources, kitchen resources, you know anything linked to  
 64 the home is important because that's gonna open up speech and language instantaneously. A  
 65 lot of the more abstract experiences we do, sort of creative and artistic things do create  
 66 language because there may be an adult with it or an adult suggesting using a particular kind  
 67 of material and children will ask questions and they will naturally fall into high engagement,  
 68 so they might not be talking. Whereas in the home room, when the caravan is open, the  
 69 language in there is so rich because the children know every single object and it's linked to  
 70 home, they know what it does, a story will come out of that and then those stories can be  
 71 turned into ideas that can then inform the environment.

72

73 I - So you think that the link to home makes that richness?

74

75 R – Yeah. I know it is because I've got two children with hearing difficulties. They've got a  
 76 great vocabulary. Way beyond what I would expect them to have because I've got other  
 77 children with similar levels of hearing difficulties and you put them in the main room and  
 78 they'll chat and they can talk to you, and then you put them in the home room where  
 79 everything is about home, and they'll have massive conversations with you about, telling you  
 80 about this is what I do with mum, or I cook this with mum, I do this and that experiential  
 81 language, you've got to have things in the environment that can bring that out and then once  
 82 the child is confident to talk about that and you've broken down that boundary and they  
 83 respect the fact that you've listen to them, you're in then. You can start that sort of dual  
 84 process.

85

86 I - Should that be the case in all the environments?

87

88 R - Yeah I think there's got to be an element of, you've got to encourage children to talk to  
 89 you about things that they understand and you've got to have a simple environment. You  
 90 can't just fill it up with things, because in a class with 30 children, the environment is going  
 91 to get so messed up that they can't actually play. There has to be enough space for them to  
 92 play and it's simple enough for the practitioners to get with the children and tidy it up, in an  
 93 organised way that the children can take part in. Practitioners shouldn't be tidying up for the  
 94 children. We all tidy up as a team but you've got to make that accessible and easy for the  
 95 children too.

96

97 I – Yeah, yeah.  
98  
99 R - And I think once you've got that basic groundwork in and your loose parts, your  
100 resources, all the things that inspire. So play, proper play, role play, play from home,  
101 imaginary play, that will then lend itself to mathematics, you know physical development,  
102 everything. The whole curriculum is supported by enabling children, enabling that's what  
103 you need, an enabling environment.  
104  
105 I - So that's the indoors and outdoors that you've talked about?  
106  
107 R - Yes I just see the thing as a whole environment .  
108  
109 I – Yeas. What about a natural environment? Forest school? How do you think that helps  
110 with speech and language? Because you haven't got the caravan and you haven't you got the  
111 loose parts necessarily. How do you think that improves speech and language?  
112  
113 R - Well that's twofold I guess. You've got the fact that children have got to listen to you  
114 when you're off site because there is a set of boundaries, instructions and directions that they  
115 understand they have to listen to. They know what the whistle means so that's good for  
116 listening and attention.  
117  
118 I - More so out there, do you think, than in the other environments?  
119  
120 R – Um, yes I wouldn't want to use the whistle inside but if I did use the whistle inside and I  
121 blew it, the whole room would go quiet and everyone would go stop, listen.  
122  
123 I – Did I hear a bell earlier?  
124  
125 R - Yes we do ring a bell to signal carpet time and that's always more of a gentle noise. The  
126 children do that themselves but the whistle is mainly for adults because when we are offsite  
127 those whistles have got to mean something because it could be danger. So we've got one  
128 meaning and that's if it blows your stop and you listen to the message and the children  
129 understand that and all the children know that they will tell you what that means, when you  
130 go on the carpet and they all absolutely adhere to that as well. I mean we generally go to the  
131 same site, so we've got different places that we go to that we've risk assessed, but when we  
132 go down to the deep woods all the children know that. Then really from the Forest School  
133 aspect when we go offsite that's the real time to let the children be free, freedom on the field,  
134 freedom to run, freedom to explore within those boundaries of listening to the whistle, them  
135 not being too far ahead and stopping. But also when we get to the woods the adults really  
136 need to step back, just be there to define the boundaries and just watch the children play and  
137 the language that comes out of that, it's fantastic. It's exploratory. They might be  
138 investigating things. Some of the children are naturally going to go off and explore some  
139 trajectory schema, climbing and investigating. Others are just going to carry on playing like  
140 they've been doing here, which often happens. They will be playing one thing in the garden  
141 and they'll just carry it on in the woods. So that rich imaginative language is still carrying on  
142 and I think the thing I took from the core of Forest School is that when we do get them off  
143 site, you've just got to relax and not think about taking anything with you. And we could go  
144 to the woods and saw but then that means we are really restricting the children's freedom and  
145 that will naturally restrict the language. If they're all lining up to saw they're not chatting.  
146 They are just going to be waiting to saw whereas I'd rather cut a log with them offsite and

147 then they all drag it back which encourages language. If they've got to work together they'll  
 148 be like oh no you're dropping it, you're picking it up and they're communicating and then  
 149 when we get back, then we can do those experiences. So going to the woods is just have  
 150 about having freedom and really taking a breath which then fits into our mindful curriculum  
 151 as well. It's just time for children to explore in a natural way, that they want to.  
 152

153 I - Yeah okay. Lovely. Thank you. So what elements then, out of all of that, do you think  
 154 are essential to promote speech and language development?  
 155

156 R - What, in the environment?  
 157

158 I - Yeah.  
 159

160 R - Umm (thinking time) Understanding the children's needs and the role of the practitioner  
 161 then. I mean they don't need us here. They need us to help them with toileting. They need  
 162 us to help them redefine the routine every day and tell them what we're doing but they're all  
 163 in their routine and they all understand it. They've been working through their routine from  
 164 babies to mobile two to mobile three to here. Other than sort of sustained shared thinking,  
 165 they're so confident, they don't need us. You can hear the language out there now. There is  
 166 no adults talking. Only when we need to step in, we would step in because they're sorting it  
 167 all out themselves. Like we've been talking about R (*child outside of the door who was*  
 168 *getting frustrated before the interview started*) He might need someone to step in and just  
 169 calm him down and to remember to listen but other than that, that language it's all child led  
 170 because they've got the environment that they need. Those environments are only borne out  
 171 of time and constant. It has to be a constant, in a constant state of flux. You can't have an  
 172 environment that is properly child led, that's the same, or has been designed to be there. You  
 173 can't design Teletubby land and then expect children to...they're always pushing it to its  
 174 limits and if you haven't got freedom, those limits are going to be breaking boundaries which  
 175 is then going to inhibit their play, put them at odds with adults and then it becomes a negative  
 176 environment because you're not allowed to do things.  
 177

178 I - So that flexibility?  
 179

180 R - Yes you've got to have that flexibility. So they've got to be free you can't, you know,  
 181 having loose parts and loose large parts so the children build, they naturally risk assess. You  
 182 know, the question I use most here is is that a good idea. It might be about a certain type of  
 183 play. Like I might go out to R now and say is that a good idea to do that? And he'll say no  
 184 probably not. It makes them think. Especially when they're building. They'll have built  
 185 something and they'll be climbing on it and I'll be like is that safe, is that a good idea? And  
 186 then they'll look at it and they'll go no, no let's build it again. Because they understand what  
 187 that means rather than the why which I think is quite a hard question to conceptualised for a  
 188 child. They understand what an idea is because we respect them here and I think that that  
 189 does pay-off in the environment.  
 190

191 I - Yeah. Thank you. So you're going to design the most, the perfect environment to  
 192 promote speech and language development. What are the three most important elements for  
 193 you to include within that design?  
 194

195 R - Space. They've got to have space to run and be free because all the role-play will usually  
 196 start from physical play. So that outlet of whatever endorphins, adrenaline, just encourage

197 them to be social and once they start running together, they're together. They'll be laughing  
198 and they'll turn and suddenly they'll all split off into a group and then, into their groups and  
199 then little role-plays will start. Investigations and explorations will start, so you've got to be  
200 able to have space, which having a free environment allows you to have because you've got  
201 all that space and then everything can come in and be used each day. Secondly, you need a  
202 set of practitioners and educators that understand the importance of the environment and your  
203 settings ethos about how you're using it I guess. I mean I'm talking from, in respect of this  
204 environment, which I know is very different to other settings but the children, you know, the  
205 practitioners do understand that you know, we're letting the children do what they want and  
206 then supporting them to make sure it's safe, then trying to play with them and work with  
207 them to extend their learning, from what they started and to push it on a little bit more, and  
208 maybe add another concept or maybe add more methods and more language. You know that  
209 sort of supports them?

210  
211 I – Yes.

212  
213 R – Yes, so the role of the practitioner which will be Reggio, which is important to us.  
214 Space, which would fit into the forest school element of what we do and also fits into our  
215 mindful curriculum. They've got to have that space to be able to take themselves away if  
216 they need to, which I think is important and then I guess the third would be um (*thinking*  
217 *time*) observation and then that reflecting which resources are in the environment because  
218 that's what the children need at any given time. Then it's the balance between those things  
219 but then also respecting the ethos and educational theories that you're trying to keep alive, if  
220 you see what I mean, within the setting.

221  
222 I – Fantastic. Last question! What does the quality environment feel like to you? So you  
223 know when you can look round a house, you walk through the door and people say it just  
224 feels right. When you walk through the door here and it just feels right, what does that feel  
225 like?

226  
227 R - Peaceful I think. Yes it's got to be, it's got to have the right resources. It's got to be  
228 uncluttered and that relates to the space and we often find that the busiest time of the day, the  
229 time where children are most stressed is drop off. So it becomes very hectic. The noise level  
230 gets very high because there's different adults in and then there's different expectations. I  
231 don't know how the children know that it affects their expectations, but it does, because  
232 they're looking for us. They want us but we might not necessarily...

233  
234 I - So do the parents!

235  
236 R - Yeah so do the parents! And we might not necessarily be able to give ourselves, no-ones  
237 fallen into their natural places in the way they've been doing it. As soon as the door shuts  
238 and as soon as we've had carpet, the noise level is up and it just starts to dip and dip as the  
239 children get engaged and you can take a breath and just look around and they're all busy and  
240 there is no adults and we've enabled that. You can hear the noise level dropping, just as  
241 we've been in here because they're getting more engaged. Some naturally just gravitate to  
242 outside and some get involved in experiences and I think I can stand in an environment and it  
243 would, it will either make my bag itch because I know it's wrong or I can just walk out and  
244 think okay I can just stand, watch and then go and get involved in something because it feels  
245 right. It is a feeling.

246

247 I - I doesn't have to be quiet to be peaceful does it?  
248  
249 R - No. I know it's got to be busy. It's always gonna be busy, there is 30 children in here  
250 but it's a different kind of peace and the peace is engaged children and that might be, it might  
251 be shouting but it is shouting with a purpose. They're not shouting because they don't know  
252 what to do. None of them are lost because the environment supports them. Does that make  
253 sense?  
254  
255 I - Perfect sense! Yeah. Is there anything else you want to add that we haven't covered,  
256 when you're thinking about quality environments and speech and language?  
257  
258 R - No nothing really. I think what was said ,you know I think, I know I waffle a lot and  
259 everything I've said you can probably, you could probably reduce it to a few bullet points.  
260  
261 I - (laughter) No not at all.  
262  
263 R - It is very complicated. It seems easy. I mean this environment looks easy but it's not. It  
264 takes me and the staff constant work to keep it going and to keep it, you know you've got to  
265 keep it tidy. It's not easy to keep it tidy because the kids are so inventive. There's stuff, you  
266 need to know what to tidy up, what to leave. Is it a danger if you leave it? Probably not but  
267  
268 I - And if you're allowing that transportation that in itself can just, you know  
269  
270 R - Well we do, you've got to, you're not enabling schema if you're not allowing it.  
271 Everything gets transported everywhere. I mean since we've had 30 kids in here I have  
272 reduced the resources right down because it was crazy. They were just tipping stuff out  
273 because it was there and they weren't playing. They were just, they were not respecting the  
274 environment but by taking the resources away and reducing it, so re-jigging what you've got  
275 out and focusing the resources in, maybe on one idea. Like we're planning for the tower at  
276 the moment. It's going to be in the garden and even though, in my head I know what it's got  
277 to look like to be safe, there is an element of it's also got to encapsulate what the children  
278 imagine a tower to be like. So we've asked them what they, like towers, we've picked up on  
279 language and we've been playing trains and they all want to go to Blackpool Tower. So  
280 someone's got an idea of what that looks like so we've put pictures of that up and we're  
281 going to use scaffolding because the kids have used it before to build the swings and then  
282 they want to use pallets to have a platform. But, you know, for me it's about the height and  
283 how high it's going to be but really all those, so last night I spent I was here till 9 o'clock  
284 redoing all the baskets for blocks and bits with new labels because I want the kids to tidy up  
285 but I also want them to be able to get everything out and build. So then I can take photos of  
286 that and think, because they're thinking about angle, we need to... You know nets and  
287 ladders and how they want it so I want it to be a true joint project. Everything is a true joint  
288 project. I want them to go out and think oh I designed that. Not, oh look we've got a new  
289 tower. They didn't have the tubes yesterday, they didn't have the cardboard. It was just  
290 blocks. And I think because we are thinking of building a tower out of wood, metal, we've  
291 found resources that they need, a whole load of bits. We're going to go in the tool room this  
292 afternoon and re-jig a castle that we've got and I'm going to give them a load of weird bits  
293 and see what happens and then I can start to see how they put the things together and then I  
294 can, when we go out it might be that we need to link wood and metal somehow and then I'll  
295 have to think about how I'm going to get around that and then risk assess but we'll get there

296 because I want them to see, we did that. That's important to them then, that's why they then  
297 respect the environment because they go out and I think I did that, that was my idea.  
298  
299 I - That ownership.  
300  
301 R - Yeah, yeah ownership and that's difficult to enable but some days it can happen and  
302 some days it doesn't, if you know what I mean. It just depends on  
303  
304 I - It needs a high level of commitment as well doesn't it?  
305  
306 R - Yes, it does. From all the practitioners yeah. You know you've got people at different  
307 levels and I think the thing I find hard is to mentor through role modelling but then I have to  
308 be mindful and take a step back and get with people and talk through what I'm doing.  
309  
310 I - Not everyone is the same though.  
311  
312 R - I know I am a people person but really I'm very, I'm more in tune with the environment I  
313 guess. That's why I love it here because that's my, that's what I've discovered my skill set is  
314 and, you know, working with the kids I've always been, you know, passionate. Yeah kids are  
315 drawn to me so I've used that, you know. So that's good.  
316  
317 I - Fantastic. Thank you so much.  
318  
319



1 Phase One - Setting Three - Practitioner Interview. (PA5, S3)

2 Role – Practitioner for four years. Just completed level three. Has worked in all three  
3 buildings (babies, 2 year-olds and pre-school). Currently working in pre-school room.

4  
5 I = interviewer

6 R = respondent

7  
8 I - First I'd like to ask you to define for me, what you think an indoor classroom is, an  
9 outdoor classroom and a natural environment. So I'm looking at the three in isolation or all  
10 combined if you want to. So imagine I know nothing about any of these. Can you tell me  
11 what an indoor classroom is?

12  
13 R - Well what I think is an indoor classroom?

14  
15 I – Yes.

16  
17 R - Table tops, colour pages, puzzles, jigsaws, anything like that.

18  
19 I – Yes.

20  
21 R – Basic. Basic, you know, kind of set ups. No child interaction, kind of... I don't know  
22 how to word it. Not initiated. It's just set out for them.

23  
24 I – Right, yeah. Adult led?

25  
26 R – Yeah. I'd find it boring. (laughter) If I'm honest. It's not for the children it's for the  
27 adult I'd say, personally.

28  
29 I – Okay. So tell me about an outdoor classroom. What do you think of an outdoor  
30 classroom?

31  
32 R – Okay. An outdoor classroom. Fun, engaging. You can get loads more experiences  
33 outside. It's better for them, like health wise.

34  
35 I – Yeah. So tell me what I would see in that outdoor classroom then? Loads more  
36 experiences.....Inside you've got colouring pages and puzzles and things like that.....

37  
38 R – Yeah. Ok. So you could do clay. Anything. You could dig up clay.

39  
40 I – Is this the outdoor classroom rather than the forest school? Or are you combining those  
41 two?

42  
43 R – Probably combining them.

44  
45 I – Combining them? Yeah. That's fine.

46

47 R - I don't know whether outdoor classroom could be set up on tables but outdoor but within  
 48 more natural kind of resources. We've got the caravan outside so that's technically outdoors  
 49 but it's an indoor, kind of.  
 50  
 51 I - Yeah. So similar kind of experiences but a bit more natural?  
 52  
 53 R - Yeah. Yeah.  
 54  
 55 I - And then whereas the Forest School?  
 56  
 57 R - Is everything! (laughter) They get more out of it, like with all the different experiences.  
 58 So if, for example, like the other week they were going to build a train inside. I thought no.  
 59 They need to do it outside. They can make it on a bigger scale. They can use lots of different  
 60 resources and a train isn't inside anyway. So they learn all the new, like all the different kind  
 61 of understanding of the world. That kind of knowledge. They were working with tickets and  
 62 all that lot so they learn basic living skills.  
 63  
 64 I - What else would I find in a natural environment? Like forest school type stuff. So  
 65 imagine I'm an alien ...  
 66  
 67 R - So there'd be animals, an allotment so they can learn all about growing and eating and  
 68 cooking and....it all kind of links in with one another. With forest school.  
 69  
 70 I - It's really hard when I put you on the spot!  
 71  
 72 R - Yeah (laughter)  
 73  
 74 I - Completely flat?  
 75  
 76 R - No, different terrains. They can use climbing. At the minute we are building a tower.  
 77 Well, planning on building a tower, which they're putting their ideas and we're going to use  
 78 scaffolding poles. We've got a climbing frame at the minute but the fence fell down so it's  
 79 all broke and we've not allowed them to use it. So we have incorporated their ideas into what  
 80 they want the tower to be outside so they've got that..... I'm trying to think of the words. So  
 81 that they can learn how to climb and build on their motor skills and  
 82  
 83 I - Fantastic. Brilliant.  
 84  
 85 R - Yeah I can't wait to see it actually done!  
 86  
 87 I - So can you tell me then, as far as those three environments are concerned, what you think  
 88 makes them a quality? What would you think makes a quality indoor environment first of  
 89 all?  
 90  
 91 R - I guess, with an indoor one, the quality would be like obviously learning about the  
 92 numbers and their alphabets, which is fine, but I think that they don't particularly need that  
 93 within this age group because they learn at school and when they go to school that's what  
 94 schools for. They should be playing. They should be learning through play. It's like when  
 95 some parents say oh do they know their ABCs well they do but in a different sense. It's not

96 like ABCD, it's, they're learning how to write it but through their own, not dots or following  
 97 the dots. It's just learning through watching and looking for their names on the name board.  
 98

99 I – Yes. Yes. So in that quality indoor environment then, you need the resources then do  
 100 you, to provide you with those experience to learn through play?  
 101

102 R – Yes. Yeah because obviously with, like I say, on the indoor one where they've got the  
 103 table tops and pages, they usually have like, I don't know whether it's got a certain word to it,  
 104 but like the dots. Where you join the dots to make a letter.  
 105

106 I - Yes I know what you mean.  
 107

108 R - We would never do that here. We would literally get their names and put them on the  
 109 table and say look you can learn from here. You can write that. That's fine even if it's like a  
 110 letter up here, a letter down there, in the corners. They're still joining up those, to make their  
 111 names.  
 112

113 I - It doesn't have to be perfect!  
 114

115 R – No! No it doesn't and even if it's just like a squiggle then they're trying and we should  
 116 still praise everything they do because otherwise....  
 117

118 I – Fantastic! What about a quality outside then? What makes an outdoor environment  
 119 quality? And a forest school again, you can combine the two if you want to.  
 120

121 R - It's hard to separate them.  
 122

123 I – Yeah.  
 124

125 R – Being able to provide the experiences and have the resources to do that, that provides  
 126 quality. I mean with some things you don't have the resources to do it but you can always,  
 127 you can use the right alternatives so...  
 128

129 I – Improvising?  
 130

131 R – Yeah. Improvisation and everything. What have we done recently that's....like we  
 132 wanted to do some clay work and we didn't have any clay left so they went off to the mud pit  
 133 and dug deep and they actually helped to dig out their own clay. So they were able to use  
 134

135 I – Oh wow!  
 136

137 R – all that and do that themselves and it's not only just them digging it up, they're learning  
 138 where clay comes from and how it's like developed as well.  
 139

140 I – Yeah. So you need the adults there to kind of initiate that don't you?  
 141

142 R – Yes. Yeah but sometimes we've had cases where children have come up to us and said  
 143 oh I need, I want to learn something about Wales or something and they've come up to us  
 144 and said I know this and I know this but where does this come from? And we've had to  
 145 google it! (laughter) But then they understand that we're, that we don't know everything and

146 we are learning as well as them. But they learn that within like any environment really but  
 147 with them having the outdoors it kind of spur more interest. If you get me.  
 148  
 149 I – Yeah. Yes. Do you think it gives them more to talk about?  
 150  
 151 R - Yes because obviously they have, here we have such a big environment and at home they  
 152 might not have that, so for them to come here and experience everything that we do here  
 153 outdoors, they can take home with them and maybe start doing it at home. Perhaps tell their  
 154 parents and it starts making them grow.  
 155  
 156 I - So that's one of the things that helps speech and language development?  
 157  
 158 R - Yes it does, definitely.  
 159  
 160 I - What other things do you think help their language, from the environment?  
 161  
 162 R – um (*thinking time*)  
 163  
 164 I – No rush. I can give you time to think about it.  
 165  
 166 R – Um. Being able to engage in things that they like personally, with other children.  
 167  
 168 I - Is that in all three?  
 169  
 170 R – Yeah. It would be the same in all three because obviously if they're interested in an  
 171 experience and their peer is interested in it then they're going to start building on that  
 172 conversation and that's going to get them going.  
 173  
 174 I – They can support each other loads can't they?  
 175  
 176 R – Yeah. Yeah.  
 177  
 178 I – They don't always need adults?  
 179  
 180 R – No. no they don't. Sometimes you hear a conversation going on and you're like wow  
 181 where did that come from? Because they don't really speak a lot compared to some children  
 182 but you know it's nice to be able to see the quiet ones, kind of come out of themselves  
 183 because they're interested in something and be able to talk about it.  
 184  
 185 I - How else do you think the environment helps speech and language development?  
 186 Resources in the environment do you think?  
 187  
 188 R - Everything that they see will help their language development. Ummm.....(*thinking*) I  
 189 can't think of anything else.  
 190  
 191 I - That's fine. That's fine. What do you think is essential to help promote speech language  
 192 development?  
 193  
 194 R - Group times. Smaller groups because you can focus in on a specific kind of focus.  
 195

196 I – Yeah.  
197  
198 R - We're doing dominoes today so we doing numbers but that does involve communication  
199 skills, by them saying oh that's a five, I need to match that with another five. I've done one  
200 where we've had storybooks but they're are all kind of linked in with one another and we've  
201 done each book in each of the different groups, every week so they've linked them but they  
202 all want to talk about them. What else? Making sure that you're engaging children in talking  
203 so if they are a quiet child, then you're making, initiating conversation with them to try and  
204 get something back or possibly inviting other children to talk to them. If you've got a really  
205 chatty child and a really quiet child then you try and put them in a group together so that they  
206 can bounce back off of one another and make them feel more comfortable. (*thinking*) Music  
207 is a good one. They tend to do that as well. It gets them talking and happy and smiley. We  
208 do dance here, yoga, meditation. That gets them talking.  
209  
210 I – Does it? What after they've done it? Afterwards?  
211  
212 R – Yeah. Afterwards. They sit really well but then afterwards they're talking about it, so  
213 they ask what the flame is doing on the candle or why does the flame do that, or why did I  
214 need to do meditation? It just brings up loads of conversation but you can see everybody  
215 thinking about it. Like all of the children.  
216  
217 I – Those experiences then? Those different experiences help to promote speech and  
218 language development?  
219  
220 R - Yes I think so, yeah.  
221  
222 I – Okay. So you're going to design the perfect environment for speech and language  
223 development. What are the three most important things that you are going to put in that  
224 environment?  
225  
226 R - Natural resources. So like your pinecones and your stones and twigs and logs. Does it  
227 have to be objects or...  
228  
229 I – No! Just the most important elements for you.  
230  
231 R - Group times. Small group times. Malleable play. So it could be like dry mixing or play  
232 dough or writing experiences using different, um different things to do. So like instead of  
233 just pens you could use like twigs to write with.  
234  
235 I - So mark making type stuff?  
236  
237 R – Yeah!  
238  
239 I – Yes. That's fine. Thank you. Last question then. What does a quality environment feel  
240 like to you? So you know if, I don't know parents quite often say when they're looking  
241 round nurseries, they walk through the door and it just feels right. Or if you're looking  
242 around to buy new home, you walk through the door and you say it just feels right. What  
243 does that feel like to you?  
244  
245 R – Home! Enjoyable. Quite calming. Relaxing. Kind of, love, I think.

246  
247 I - That's gorgeous!  
248  
249 R - Because if you don't have those, then it's not a place is it? You need all of that,  
250 altogether, to make, I can't even think of the word. It's like, to make it possible to learn and  
251 to build on something that's beautiful because it is beautiful here and I absolutely love it and  
252 before here I'd never even looked at a place like this. I didn't even know that this existed and  
253 I'm so glad that this is where I am because I've grown so much myself and I feel like I'm  
254 helping other children and families to build on what we have become. Do you know what I  
255 mean?  
256  
257 I - Yes. Definitely. Did you work anywhere else before?  
258  
259 R - In a chip shop (*laughter*) I did six months at another preschool, volunteering every day  
260 because I wanted, because I really wanted to work with children but because of my age they  
261 wouldn't let me have an apprenticeship. So I volunteered for six months every day and they  
262 said to me that they were going to give me an apprenticeship and then let me down. So I  
263 ended up searching again and luckily I found this one, came in for the interview and got  
264 home and I got a phone call and so I was like oh my God!! I honestly cried!  
265  
266 I - So does this feel different to the place where you volunteered?  
267  
268 R - So different! I obviously, when I first started in that place I didn't know any different so I  
269 came here and I was gobsmacked! I walked through that door for my interview and I was  
270 like wow this is amazing (*laughter*). I was, honestly I was just, I didn't know what to say  
271 because I've never seen anything like it before in my life and now I've been working here, I  
272 can kind of, I take bits from here home, to do at home, which is really nice because my mum  
273 has like my niece and nephew live with them and it's nice for me to take that back to them  
274 and do it with them, because they don't get it at home. My mum tries but she doesn't know  
275 here as well as what I do so, so it's good.  
276  
277 I - Thank you very, very much.  
278  
279  
280  
281

1 Phase One - Setting Three - Practitioner Interview. (PA6, S3)

2 Role – Educator. Been at setting since September (4 months). Worked here before two  
3 years ago, for three years. Left for a bit, went to be a nanny, then worked at another nursery  
4 then came back.

5  
6 I = interviewer

7 R = respondent

8

9 I - So first of all, what I'm going to ask you to do then, is to define for me what you think an  
10 indoor classroom is, an outdoor classroom is and a natural environment is. So imagine I  
11 know nothing about any of them. How would you describe them?

12

13 R - So an indoor environment is an enclosed space, with walls and a roof and a door way to  
14 get in and out (*laughter*)

15

16 I - And what would you find in it?

17

18 R - You would find tables and chairs. Carpet area. Do you want me to describe it like set up  
19 for children?

20

21 I – Yes!

22

23 R – Yeah. Ok. So resources. So there'll be a block area, mark making, somewhere for  
24 mark making, painting, malleable play. These areas aren't stuck to where they are, they can  
25 be moved about. Um, let me think. Obviously a bathroom and a kitchen for making food.

26

27 I - That's fine. So what about an outdoor classroom? I'm splitting outdoor classroom and  
28 natural environment here, forest school, if you can differentiate the two but you can combine  
29 it.

30

31 R - Okay so an outdoor classroom. Anywhere outdoors. It doesn't have to be connected to  
32 the indoor necessarily because we go to the woods on the field and that still, I'd still class that  
33 as outdoor.

34

35 I - Rather than a natural?

36

37 R - Yeah because they're still learning. They're still learning by being there.

38

39 I – Yeah. So an outdoor classroom then, from your definition is anywhere you can learn  
40 outdoors?

41

42 R – Yes!

43

44 I – Okay. So would you see resources?

45

46 R - I suppose if we talking about the garden, there would be resources. So there'd be the  
47 sand area, buckets and spade's, water area, pots and pans. I think lots and lots of space so  
48 not necessarily too much stuff. I think space is really important.

49  
50 I - To move around rather than stuff?  
51  
52 R - Yes! Yes, space for the children to see whatever, whatever they want to do with it.  
53  
54 I - So more physical than the indoor classroom?  
55  
56 R - I'd say so, yes.  
57  
58 I - And then the natural environment? The forest school?  
59  
60 R - Yes. So the natural environment would be in the woods, fields with gates to a wooded  
61 area, with a stream sometimes.  
62  
63 I - Yeah, okay. So can you tell me then, with regards to playing and learning, what do you  
64 think constitutes a quality indoor environment, outdoor environment and natural  
65 environment?  
66  
67 R - So indoor I think, I think it's quite hard to split them. I mean all over it's important that  
68 the environment reflects the children's interests because if not what's the point of all the stuff  
69 being there?  
70  
71 I - Yeah.  
72  
73 R - So it's similar to what I've said already I guess. Like, I think just areas that reflect their  
74 interest so if they're interested in, I don't know, acting and drama having the home corner  
75 with dressing up resources so yeah, a flexible environment I suppose reflects quality.  
76  
77 I - In all three?  
78  
79 R - Yeah, yeah. Things not being tied down so not this needs to go on this table and this  
80 needs to go on this table. It's really important that you can, you know, after something is  
81 finished after 10 minutes you can get rid of that and put something else out.  
82  
83 I - And would you allow children to transport them?  
84  
85 R - Yes. Yeah I mean obviously you still need some sort of rules else everything will end up  
86 everywhere like carnage! Yeah! *(laughter)* Yeah and to support their schemas, that's really  
87 important.  
88  
89 I - Yeah, fantastic. Thank you. So how do you think that these areas help speech and  
90 language development? Again, with the three?  
91  
92 R - Okay, talking as a whole again, I think just for the experience of, well experiencing  
93 everything so they're not just experiencing an indoor place, you know if they don't know  
94 what a tree is, or what a log would look like, they're not as likely to say the words.  
95  
96 I - So giving them new experiences?  
97



98 R - Yes that they might not have. Yeah, yeah that they might not have otherwise if they  
 99 didn't come here.  
 100  
 101 I - Yeah.  
 102  
 103 R - And I think having an environment that reflects their interests, they're more likely to  
 104 develop speech and language, if they're interested in what's going on around them. I don't  
 105 know if this has anything to do with it but having staff that believe in that kind of  
 106 environment, being role models for the children and the staff using some form of creative and  
 107 descriptive language all the time. And having real objects to handle, not just plastic things.  
 108 You know having...  
 109  
 110 I - Yeah.  
 111  
 112 R - Just real objects and then objects that can be anything so like sticks and stones and they  
 113 can pretend they're something else.  
 114  
 115 I - Open ended resources?  
 116  
 117 R - Yeah that's really good for developing communication and language.  
 118  
 119 I - So all of those things cover off all of those environments really don't they?  
 120  
 121 R - Yeah, yeah.  
 122  
 123 I - Thank you. So what elements do you think are necessary then to promote speech and  
 124 language development? I think we might have just done that actually.  
 125  
 126 R - Yeah.  
 127  
 128 I - So they're the things that you think help that speech and language and are essential?  
 129 Would you agree?  
 130  
 131 R - Yeah. I don't think there's anything else.  
 132  
 133 I - So if you were going to design the perfect environment to help speech and language  
 134 development what would be the three most important things that you'd put in it?  
 135  
 136 R - Okay. So are you talking about indoor and outdoor?  
 137  
 138 I - Wherever! Where would it be, maybe?  
 139  
 140 R - So that's really hard! (*laughter*) So there'd be definitely an outdoor area. And then if I  
 141 say an indoor then that's two!! And I've only got one left! (*laughter*)  
 142  
 143 I - You could say free flow between indoor and outdoor. That would be a way to get over  
 144 that (*laughter*) But would you want it to be free flow?  
 145  
 146 R - Oh yeah! Yes! Without a doubt. Freeflow. Open ended resources. So freeflow, open  
 147 ended resources and..... (*thinking*) I don't know whether to say the staff or space.

148  
149 I – Maybe both equally important! Shall I give you both? (*laughter*)  
150  
151 R - I know I'm cheating a little bit (*laughter*)  
152  
153 I – So staff and space?  
154  
155 R - Yeah (*laughter*)  
156  
157 I - Last question then. What does a quality environment feel like to you? So, you know  
158 when you walk through the door somewhere and it just feels right. What does that feel like to  
159 you?  
160  
161 R - So for me it feels calm but with, I don't know, it's really hard to describe but with a noise  
162 of learning. Possibly music. It feels alive I suppose. Yeah.  
163  
164 I – Yeah.  
165  
166 R - Is that okay?  
167  
168 I – Yeah! Yeah it's fine. It doesn't have to be quiet to be calm does it?  
169  
170 R – No, no.  
171  
172 I - Is there anything else that you want to add?  
173  
174 R - I'm sure there will be after an hour when I've thought of it!!!! (*laughter*)  
175  
176 I - Thank you so much. That's really great!  
177

1 **Phase One - Setting Three - Parent Interview. (PA7, S3)**

2 Role – Parent of daughter (B) aged three and three months. Two years before she starts

3 school. Older daughter (O) (aged 8) at school.

4

5

6 I = interviewer

7 R = respondent

8

9 I - First of all what I'd like to ask you to do is, can you define for me, what you think, what

10 comes in your head what I ask you what an indoor classroom is, an outdoor classroom and a

11 natural environment? So an outdoor classroom and natural environment, with natural

12 environment being sort of like forest school? So we've got the three environments.

13

14 R – So what I think? What's in my head?

15

16 I – Yes. What pops into your head when I say indoor classroom?

17

18 R – Indoor classrooms? Desks. Formal. So pens, paper, a teachers desk, kind of thing, an

19 area for sitting down and listening to stories and an indoor classroom of like B's age or

20 reception at school would have play, because obviously I've been there with O, a play area.

21 Learning through play but not kind of, if I think of the others, more formal indoor.

22

23 I – Yeah. So then an outdoor classroom?

24

25 R - Outdoor classroom. I have visions of like, more foresty, so climbing, wood, treehouses,

26 pans, like you know um

27

28 I – Yeah

29

30 R – Mud pies and water. Tools that are, you know, safe for children to use. That kind of

31 thing.

32

33 I – Lovely. And a natural environment?

34

35 R - Similar thing, yeah.

36

37 I - Similar to outdoor classroom?

38

39 R – Yeah, but perhaps, perhaps more hut, you know hut like places to go into rather than

40 these are mobiles. That's what I probably have in my head.

41

42 I – Yeah. Okay. So then can you tell me please, what you think, with regards to playing and

43 learning, what you think is a quality indoor environment, outdoor environment and natural

44 environment?

45

46 R - What do you mean, like what I think they'd benefit that makes from?

47

48 I – Yes.

49  
50 R - So well indoor, I think children learning through play. So I think like your reception year  
51 as first year at primary school is a really important year. I don't know why anyone would  
52 want to keep their children out of that because it's like the first year, they can learn through  
53 play and experiment with things, how children should. You know rather than being sat down  
54 and told, because you've got all the years in the world ahead of you of that happening and I  
55 think if they're are able to learn through play, they learn quicker and more. Because they are  
56 doing it.  
57  
58 I - So that quality environment needs the stuff in there to play with?  
59  
60 R - Yeah! Yes. So it needs to have, you know along with how I imagine it, pens and paper,  
61 you perhaps need to have play dough, or dough and, you know, things like that.  
62  
63 I - Lovely. And what about the outdoor environment, an outdoor classroom? How do you  
64 make that quality?  
65  
66 R - Quality? Well pretty much the things they've got here. Different areas outside, one with  
67 tools where they can chop things and experiment with tools and scissors, and then an area  
68 where they can role-play, with mud pies and different areas, outdoor I think, different things.  
69 A climbing area, a den area I think where they can get like lost in their own little world. And  
70 use their own imagination which is what I think it B is just obsessed with here, because she  
71 has got that imagination.  
72  
73 I - Right, yeah.  
74  
75 R - And I think being out there helps her, because she can just get lost in it, you know, and  
76 other children they give each other ideas, don't they?  
77  
78 I - Yeah, yeah definitely.  
79  
80 R - They copy each other and then she'll bring them home. You know, them ideas  
81  
82 I - Yeah! Whether they are good or not!!!! (*laughter*)  
83  
84 R - Yeah, definitely!  
85  
86 I - So then what makes the natural environment quality?  
87  
88 R - Probably similar to the outdoor but I'm guessing like with natural, in my head I'd have,  
89 probably ideas of like, probably doing bonfires and, you know the things you wouldn't  
90 necessarily do at home.  
91  
92 I - Yeah.  
93  
94 R - I mean we have a log burner but it's very much, no it's hot, you don't go near it.  
95 Whereas I think they have, in a natural environment, I don't know, I think they've done it  
96 here where they sit round and let the children experiment a bit. Safely obviously.  
97  
98 I - So kind of an exposure to risk?

99  
100 R – Yeah. Yeah and probably different ideas, to completely different to what an indoors  
101 would be, so probably food tasting and sort of thing I was thinking in a natural.  
102  
103 I – Smashing. Thank you. So tell me how you think these environments help speech and  
104 language? So you started touching on this earlier.  
105  
106 R – So, what, with all three?  
107  
108 I – Yeah. You can do them separately or altogether or...  
109  
110 R – Well like I say, I think for here for B, because it's just, you're out there and you're seeing  
111 the things. You know if they're in an indoor classroom and O went to one. She went to a  
112 brilliant indoor preschool and she learnt so much and like I say, she did know the alphabet  
113 before school, so she could write any word. She knew how to count to 20 and back and I  
114 suppose in some ways you would say, I mean B isn't that age yet, but she was more advanced  
115 but, what can I say, with B she's out there. She gets out there. She will pick a worm up and  
116 say it's a wriggly worm. You know, whereas O wouldn't of done that. And like acorns and  
117 conkers and fir tree. I think B, she kind of exaggerates words more. She knows more words.  
118 She'll describe the words more but O would've said a tree and B will say it's a fir tree but  
119 she's probably been shown that from being outside so much. Because she wants to be  
120 outside. We're outside. I'm always freezing cold. We're outside in the winter as soon as it's  
121 dry. You know, it's healthy as well.  
122  
123 I – Yeah. Yeah  
124  
125 R - And in the garden she's just, well she's hiding treasure, she's at, well she's away. You  
126 know, like the word treasure. She just, she knows these words and I think it comes from  
127 here.  
128  
129 I – Does it come through all these environments?  
130  
131 R – Yeah, well especially outdoor and natural, I think, more so, but yeah I just think, just the  
132 doing. I think they do more outside. You know. Whereas, if they're sat in a classroom and  
133 they're learning from books, which is great, and I'm not knocking that. but I think if they're  
134 actually doing it they take it in more. And they have that sense where they actually dare to do  
135 it. you know. I think that's the difference that I've seen. Having one go to each, indoor and  
136 outdoor.  
137  
138 I - Thank you. So what elements do you think are important then or essential to help speech  
139 and language develop?  
140  
141 R - What do you mean? What things?  
142  
143 I – Yeah. What things?  
144  
145 R – Well, having a good variety of like, probably areas, for outdoor and natural ones. A  
146 mixture of, like I say, climbing and tools and just having a good well-equipped, so that they  
147 can experience as much as they can. And if it was for indoor they can ensure that they do  
148 have, sort of the nature side, inside as well. I mean I think like here, having animals, live

149 animals, it's really important because not every child's got a pets at home have they? I just  
 150 think it's important that they have a real good variety of tools and apparatus really.  
 151  
 152 I – Experiences?  
 153  
 154 R – Yeah. Experiences. Like they do here. They take them out on nature walks and mud,  
 155 slipping down mud slides if they want. It's all the things you can't necessarily do with them  
 156 at home.  
 157  
 158 I – Or you wouldn't want to!!! (*laughter*)  
 159  
 160 R – No. Because it's your house!! You know, so to be able to give them that and that's good  
 161 because, like they know that yes I can do that at school but no I can't do that at home.  
 162  
 163 I – Yeah.  
 164  
 165 R – Hopefully!! (*laughter*)  
 166  
 167 I - Okay. So you're going to design the perfect environment to help speak to language  
 168 develop. What are your three most important things that you want to include in that  
 169 environment?  
 170  
 171 R – So, let me think. Ah this is a tough one! The three most important things to help them  
 172 learn?  
 173  
 174 I – Yes. Particularly as far as their speech is concerned.  
 175  
 176 R – So, I think nature, like an area of nature. So, like if they have an area where there is  
 177 perhaps water with natural insects in. You know, so stuff that can teach them about animals,  
 178 creatures. I think a tool area is really important because it, it, you know they'll ask. If  
 179 you've got a shed full of tools, like when you go in your grandad's shed. Like, you just want  
 180 to know what every single thing is don't you? And what it does. And so I think that's quite  
 181 important and then I guess, I guess with every classroom to have your paper and your pens,  
 182 so that they can bring it back and draw and put it down on paper. So I think the den parts  
 183 quite important, because I think it's somewhere where they can take themselves off to. You  
 184 know, if everything gets a bit too much, or it's like they are in this little world that they go  
 185 into and they just want to go and have a minute. Yeah, I think that's quite important as well.  
 186 So...  
 187  
 188 I – Fantastic!  
 189  
 190 R - Is that three?  
 191  
 192 I - That's four!  
 193  
 194 R – Four??!! That's good then!!  
 195  
 196 I - So last question. What does the quality environment feel like to you? So you know when  
 197 you go and look around a house to move, and you walk through the door and you say, yes  
 198 this just feels right. What does that feel like to you?

199  
200 R - Okay . So for me it was, walking in here, and there wasn't, when I came to view this,  
201 there wasn't one child crying. It was happy. It was calm. It was peaceful and it was just  
202 like, I felt like when I walked in here with B I could've cried because I felt like, oh it's  
203 everything you'd want as a child. You know that feeling of, where do I start? And B was  
204 very shy before she came here and she just went. She just let go of my hand and went. And I  
205 think it felt really calm and safe. And she actually took a member of staff's hand while I was  
206 having a meeting with R (manager) and I think she trusted straightaway. You know? It was  
207 calm. Calm and happy. It's really important to little ones.  
208  
209 I – And us!  
210  
211 R – Yes. Oh yes. Yeah I mean yeah, you get the days where one's started because  
212 something started them off so another one starts. But that's, you know, it's a happy place  
213 here, that I've ever seen. So I think that's really important.  
214  
215 I – Fantastic!  
216  
217 R - Is that alright?  
218  
219 I - Really great. Thank you. Really helpful. Thank you.  
220  
221  
222

1    **Phase One - Setting Three - Parent Interview. (PA8, S3)**

2    Role – Parent of son (J) who has just turned four. He goes to school in September. Older

3    sibling at school.

4

5

6    I = interviewer

7    R = respondent

8

9    I - So what I want to ask you first, is how you would define these environments for me. So I

10    would like you to define what you think, what pops into your head when you think about

11    indoor classrooms, outdoor classrooms and natural environments. So what pops into your

12    head when you think about indoor classroom?

13

14    R – Restricted. That would be the first word.

15

16    I – Yes.

17

18    R – I suppose, yes, space restricted and just the imagination is very different.

19

20    I - So space restricts that imagination?

21

22    R – Yes .

23

24    I – Okay. What would you expect to see in these kind of environments? What pops into your

25    head when you think about what you'd see in an indoor classroom?

26

27    R – Tables, blackboard or whiteboard.

28

29    I – Yeah.

30

31    R - Maybe some things on the wall. There's usually an element of something isn't there?

32    Maths, numbers, times tables.

33

34    I – Displays?

35

36    R - Yeah . Displays.

37

38    I – Fantastic. And then an outdoor classroom?

39

40    R - I think of trees and fresh air and just space. Natural things. Sticks and stones and just the

41    ability I suppose to be a bit more messy. You haven't got the restriction of keeping it clean,

42    the carpets.

43

44    I – Yes. Would you expect to see toys in that environment?

45

46    R - Yes but I suppose I wouldn't imagine it to be more when you think of outdoor play a bit

47    more natural but yeah, toys. Climbing. Definitely a lot more toys.

48



49 I – You said climbing, so more physical then?  
50  
51 R – Yes. And actually I don't think of toys when I think of indoor classrooms. That doesn't  
52 come to mind. I'd not thought about that before.  
53  
54 I - And natural environment then, Forest school, what do you think of then?  
55  
56 R - Forest School, probably what I've just said.  
57  
58 I – Have you put the outdoor classroom and that together?  
59  
60 R – Yes.  
61  
62 I - That's absolutely fine. So can you then tell me what you think is a quality environment,  
63 for those three. So what do you think is a quality indoor environment? If you were looking  
64 around a nursery, what would make you think this is a good place to be? Or this is not a good  
65 place to be? What constitutes quality?  
66  
67 R - I would want the indoor space to be bright and airy. I'd like to see the windows open or  
68 potentially doors open, even. Just so I'd know that that was happening constantly. And I  
69 suppose just lots of space for them to be imaginative. I wouldn't want, for a nursery setting, I  
70 wouldn't want too much structure. That would be the main thing for me. If it was very  
71 regimented then that would definitely put me off.  
72  
73 I – Right  
74  
75 R - So some people would like that but for me that would be a no. And a lot of children in a  
76 small space I would think, it's the larger the better.  
77  
78 I – Yes. And then the outdoor? What would make, what would make you think this is a  
79 good place to be?  
80  
81 R - As much space as possible again and lots of just potential for them just be, to run free and  
82 to play and so whether that would....You know separate areas don't necessarily worry me so  
83 much. I think they can make their own play and I don' think they need, this is where you  
84 play sand, this is this.  
85  
86 I – So, yeas. Right.  
87  
88 R – So yes, Less structured. I mean if they wanted to play sand anywhere they could. If they  
89 wanted to paint anywhere they could. They don't have to do it in a specific area.  
90  
91 I – Yeah. And is outdoor and in the Forest School area?  
92  
93 R – Yes. Yes, I think so.  
94  
95 I – Fantastic. Thank you. How do you think these areas help speech and language  
96 development? You can separate them or do them all together.  
97

98 R - Well I would think that speech comes from just being, just learning. I think you're more  
 99 likely to get the words from them if they're, if they've got freedom to do it when they want  
 100 with their peers listening, rather than a group sitting down to learn ABC. I think it would  
 101 come with opportunities to draw and I suppose more, more opportunities. So if they're  
 102 outdoors there's a lot more to stimulate them to talk I suppose. So whether, you know the  
 103 weather can spark conversation. And what they find can spark conversation. Whereas  
 104 indoors it's, again, there's less for them to, to talk about or to make them. I would say that  
 105 speech comes from imagination doesn't it?  
 106  
 107 I - Yeah and you need that environment to promote imagination?  
 108  
 109 R - Yeah.  
 110  
 111 I - Okay.  
 112  
 113 R - Especially when they're young.  
 114  
 115 I - Yeah.  
 116  
 117 R - Being around people I think. You need...if you were just with one person all day who  
 118 wasn't speaking much to you then maybe... just speaking to them at their level as well.  
 119 Letting them talk.  
 120  
 121 I - By a range of people?  
 122  
 123 R - Yeah. Yeah.  
 124  
 125 I - OK. So what in your opinion then are the elements that are essential to help speech and  
 126 language develop?  
 127  
 128 R - I think music. We have a lot of music don't we J? It's not really silent in our house. It's  
 129 always, we have music playing, we have the radio on, there's always talking, reading books.  
 130 We do a lot of sitting down and reading. And just having I think, more people, experiences,  
 131 and people, different types of people. That social side of things, the more social the better.  
 132  
 133 I - Okay. Fantastic. Thank you. So you are going to design the perfect environment to help  
 134 speech and language develop. What are the three most important things for you in that  
 135 environment?  
 136  
 137 R - I would say a , a busy environment where....a positive environment where it was... I  
 138 suppose not too much noise where it's too.. so you can't hear anyone speak but a lot of, a lot  
 139 of communication, a lot of music, books around. Just a lot of different experiences that  
 140 would interest them and want to get them talking. And drawing. So lots of different drawing  
 141 materials and things always help, I think, the speech. So.....  
 142  
 143 I - Yes. Fantastic. Last question then. What does a quality environment feel like to you?  
 144 So you know when you walk through the door of somewhere and it feels right, if you're  
 145 looking at a new house? So how does that make you feel?  
 146

147 R - I think there would be an instant warmth and friendly. You can just pick up on the people  
148 that are, that will be looking after them. They have to have a certain vibe about them I think.  
149 That positivity and a sense of well-being and that would be very important to me. You need  
150 a certain amount of structure I think. So you need to know when to set them thing but not too  
151 much, not too controlled. You all do things at different stages don't you? (*addressing J*)  
152 You all get there eventually!  
153  
154 I - Thank you so much. I really, really appreciate it. Thank you  
155  
156  
157

1 **Phase One - Setting Four – Parent Interview. (PA1, S4)**

2 Role – Father of B (son) and G (daughter). B attended setting from nine months old until he

3 went to school. He is now 5. G is 3 and has attended the setting since she was 9 months old.

4 I = interviewer

5 R = respondent

6

7

8 I - Okay so the first of all, as you know I'm looking at different environments

9

10 R – Yeah

11

12 I – First of all what I'd like you to do it define for me what you perceive these environments

13 to be. So I'm looking at indoor environments, outdoor classrooms and natural environments.

14

15 R – Yeah

16

17 I – So I've got there different environments that I'd like you to define for me. So imagine I

18 know nothing about these environments, tell me what you think an indoor classroom is.

19 What pops into your head?

20

21 R – OK. So my immediate perception of an indoor classroom will be something that is very

22 visually stimulating, in terms of colours, pictures, shapes, textures, errr

23

24 I – So lots of colour?

25

26 R – What's a colour sorry??

27

28 I – Lots of colour?

29

30 R- I thought you said what's a colour then, sorry!! (laughter) Yes lots of colour, lots of

31 textures, shapes er anything that's sort of visually stimulating. Ummm

32

33 I – Yeah

34

35 R – It's always nice to have separate areas I think, umm, so you know reading corner is

36 always very good. A craft area. Obviously you need somewhere for coats and all that kind

37 of thing, but I think the more areas a building can be broken up into the better. Ummm it's

38 always nice to see the children's own, sort of work put up around the place so that they can

39 see the fruits of their labour and it's not just consigned to a pile somewhere. I think that's

40 really important. Obviously you've got normal kind of comforts so, you know good lighting,

41 it has to be warm, it has to be comfortable. You know, a degree a cleanliness. I think it can

42 be a little bit too clean in today's society but, you know, you don't want it be filthy. So that's

43 kind of, for me, the indoor environment.

44

45 I – So do you think you've covered there what makes that quality there as well? You've

46 given me a definition and you're telling me what makes that good?

47  
48 R – Yes exactly! Yes indeed. Sorry – I’ve answered two questions at once there!  
49  
50 I – No that’s fine!  
51  
52 R – So that’s what I’d perceive an indoor environment to be. Somewhere that’s a bit of a  
53 refuge I suppose as well.  
54  
55 I – Yes? So you need quiet spaces?  
56  
57 R - Yes I mean it can be very difficult to have quiet spaces when you’ve got sort of  
58 marauding 30 kids but I mean over recent years they’ve certainly managed that here. Umm I  
59 think, because I think you sometimes have such a big age range of children, some still  
60 needing daytime naps and all the rest of it, the ability to have the sort of calmer, quieter  
61 environment...they’ve obviously got a baby room here and that’s really important. Just so  
62 that you know, you probably already know, but both of our children have been here since sort  
63 of 9 months maybe. Something like that. They were young, very young, when they both  
64 started coming on a day to day  
65  
66 I – So is your older child now at school?  
67  
68 R – He’s left, yeah, He started, he’s five, he joined when he was about I think 9 months and  
69 to be honest we found the environment so good for him that it was kind of a no brainer that G  
70 would go as well.  
71  
72 I – How old’s G now?  
73  
74 R – She’s 3 so both birthdays are in September so she’ll be 4 next birthday.  
75  
76 I – So she’s got another year before school?  
77  
78 R – She has yes! And actually in hindsight it’s quite a good thing I think because we initially  
79 were, I mean both of them are quite bright kids and we were slightly worried. I mean every  
80 year B’s, because he was always associated with the older children and they’ve left and gone  
81 to school and we were like God, every year he loses his peer group and his friend group,  
82 umm...but actually seeing him now in junior school, infant school, it’s been a very good  
83 thing I think because although intellectually he was ready, emotionally he probably wasn’t,  
84 so it’s actually been really good for him.  
85  
86 I – So you’ve had plenty of experience of this setting then?  
87  
88 R – Yes I’ve got, Yes.  
89  
90 I – OK, brilliant. Thank you. So we’ve done the indoors then. Now outdoor classroom!  
91  
92 R – So similar I think. Similar kind of principles. The idea of it being stimulating for all  
93 types of children, um, so things to do, colours, shapes, I think again things to climb on, things  
94 to make, like a craft areas...all the sort of stuff that feeds their imagination. And again, I’m  
95 sure that you’ll come onto the specifics of this place but this place has developed and grown

96 over the last four years, since B's joined and it's incredible what a relatively small space it's  
 97 amazing what they can kind of pack in...  
 98  
 99 I – So have you seen the quality improve?  
 100  
 101 R – Oh yes expediently! I mean it was good when we started. I mean, even compared to  
 102 other places, because we looked at a few, so it was good when we stated but it has just got  
 103 better and better over the years.  
 104  
 105 I – So what makes that outdoor classroom better now then?  
 106  
 107 R – So let me think. Now the different things that they've got, so they've introduced for  
 108 example, when B started they didn't have pets and I think they've got two guinea pigs now  
 109 and they've got the cage so that's teaching the children all about looking after animals and  
 110 that kind of thing. The snuggle den right at the back wasn't there – it was just an unrenovated  
 111 sort of kind of barn. A storage barn. So that's been transformed into this wonderful quiet  
 112 space, which is lovely. I'm pretty sure that the sand pit area is relatively new. I can't  
 113 remember if that was there when we arrived. I'm not sure. Other things that have been there.  
 114 I mean there's now the porch lean to bit which is out the back, which is now covered, was an  
 115 open space  
 116  
 117 I – Yes  
 118  
 119 R – So, I think one of the things we've always loved about here is this kind of free-flow from  
 120 indoor to outdoor and the ability for the children, frankly in all weathers, to be outside. I  
 121 think you just can't put a price on that for me. It's so important. We've got friends who still  
 122 live in London, a couple live in LA, and they are constrained a lot of the time by being  
 123 indoors and you know, I grew up in a village around here as well, moved back to London  
 124 myself and came back to have a family and I think that the ability to have outdoor play is  
 125 phenomenal. And of course you've got the added dimension with this setting, with forest  
 126 school, which is just incredible.  
 127  
 128 I – Which we are going to go onto now! So tell me what you think of with regards to the  
 129 natural environment?  
 130  
 131 R – I mean ...  
 132  
 133 I – How would you define that? What makes that quality?  
 134  
 135 R – Interaction. I guess an interaction with, and an appreciation of the outdoor environment.  
 136 So that would be plants, flora, fauna, animals and that ability to learn. I think to get dirty. To  
 137 do all the sorts of things....I think what I really like is the level of trust and responsibility  
 138 these children here are being given from a very early age. You know, they're not wrapped in  
 139 cotton wool in the traditional sense. There are obviously all the normal risk assessments and  
 140 everything else but it's a permissive regime rather than a prohibitory regime. You very  
 141 rarely hear, you know, "Stop, don't" and all the rest of it. They'll actually be told the right  
 142 way to make a fire. How to be safe around a fire. How to use, you know, a hammer and  
 143 whatever it is. Stuff which sometimes there's a moment where you think oh my God three  
 144 and four year olds are learning how to make fire (laughter) but you know what? The  
 145 environment that they're being given that trust and responsibility in is a very protective and

146 supportive environment and you see them grow in their own confidence. I mean it's  
 147 absolutely fantastic. You know, so we've been hugely pleased with that. Yeah.  
 148

149 I – And do you think that that helps speech and language? You know, that environment?  
 150

151 R – Yes I do because I think, I think the thing with language from a completely uneducated  
 152 perspective, I think the more exposure children are given to different things, I think by  
 153 definition they want to explore, use language to explore that new experience more. So they  
 154 have to use words to explain what they've just done. So if you asked them what they did at  
 155 forest school or how does that...they have to think of ways to describe what they've done.  
 156 So that must open up a range of vocabulary and descriptive words.  
 157

158 I – What those new experiences?  
 159

160 R – Yes absolutely! Because otherwise I suppose if you take the two extremes. If you take a  
 161 child who is, who sits in the same room with no stimulus each day their vocabulary has to be  
 162 limited because their experience is limited so what are they going to be talking about?  
 163 Whereas if they're thrown into a world with completely different stimulus and new stimulus  
 164 and experiences they will want to naturally, I would imagine, sort of tell what they've been  
 165 doing and using words to explain that.  
 166

167 I – Yes. Do you find that with your children?  
 168

169 R – Oh completely! I mean it's been fascinating watching their development. I mean the old  
 170 cliché and phrase that children are like sponges. I mean we are astounded by G and B.  
 171 Particularly B I think with terms of his memory of things that happened a long time  
 172 previously. We'll be like "where did you learn that?" and a number of times, he's five. He's  
 173 been correcting us since he's been about 3 ½! (laughter) Seriously. There will be things that  
 174 he's remembered and I'll be like "no, no, no, no you didn't!" "no, I did Daddy. You  
 175 remember?" and it will be a year ago, six months ago that something had happened or he'd  
 176 done something and he's recalling all this stuff and it's amazing. He'll just come out with  
 177 things and they are...the more stuff they're exposed to the better. I mean we've definitely  
 178 seen it with G and B and that's why we always try as well to let them play. We...it's  
 179 interesting that there are different schools of thought about, you know, what leisure time  
 180 should be. So my view is here they have such a full on, and so do they at school obviously,  
 181 but they have such a full on Monday to Friday where they have frankly way more exposure to  
 182 doing stuff than a parent has ever got the time or energy to do, when it comes to after school  
 183 or weekends then a lot of the time they just want to play in their own environment.  
 184

185 I – Yes.  
 186

187 R- Some parents do the reverse and will take their children to ballet, judo, rugby and literally  
 188 timetable their weekend. I think in the belief that, again, they're doing good stuff and it's just  
 189 a different belief system I suppose in terms of what children do and obviously the older the  
 190 get I'm sure there'll be interests that they will want to pursue by themselves and we'll  
 191 facilitate that but I think, while they are at this age...I mean we're very fortunate that we've  
 192 got a very nice garden with ponds and vegetable patches and they can roam and do their own  
 193 stuff. They just want to play, with their own toys and in their own environment, use their  
 194 own imagination to create their own worlds rather than necessarily going to another  
 195 structured event, thing, which I'm sure has it's benefits as well. They have social interaction

196 with different people and do different things. But we're kind of, I used to just remember  
 197 playing and I think that helps language as well. Even if you're just creating stories in your  
 198 head. You know again with what you're doing, the two work well together.  
 199  
 200 I – So that, those prompts for imagination are crucial?  
 201  
 202 R – Yes – I think definitely!  
 203  
 204 I – What other things do you think are essential to help speech and language?  
 205  
 206 R – I think verbal interaction in whatever form. We have read to our children from the year  
 207 dot, and a lot. And they still, you know every night before bed they have at least two or three  
 208 stories and they'll usually sit with one or both of us and that is a sacrosanct time. And again  
 209 from a very, very early age they'll be remembering the words in the books way before they  
 210 could read. And they'll be telling the story ahead of us, with their favourite books.  
 211  
 212 I – Which can be a pain sometimes can't it when you want to skip some pages?!!!! (laughter)  
 213  
 214 R – Well – yes!! Exactly! And they go "it doesn't say that. It says such and such!!" So, we  
 215 also make up stories all the time. We went through, its' kind of mentally draining but taking  
 216 B and G here they want a story. They want me to make up a story from the moment we step  
 217 into the car which I then have to continue from the five miles from home to here.  
 218  
 219 I – How gorgeous though!  
 220  
 221 R – Well it is! You know and you kind of, that's why I sort of think.....  
 222  
 223 I – Do you sometimes just wish you could put Radio 1 on?!!!! (laughing!)  
 224  
 225 R – Yeah you do but then this will all soon be gone and you have to remind yourself that this  
 226 time will be gone so quickly and while they are literally sponges we're just trying to throw as  
 227 much of this stuff their way. Of course it's great now, you know because B's at school and  
 228 he's now writing and reading pretty well and getting on really quickly, G wants to do  
 229 everything that B does as well so she, her stories she will have, it's hilarious the difference  
 230 between them but she will get a note book and she will be mark making, it's almost like  
 231 shorthand. Perfect shorthand within the lines of a book, with a pen. Incredibly neat! But  
 232 she'll be talking to herself a story. So she'll be writing and telling herself a story as though  
 233 she's noting it down.  
 234  
 235 I – She realises that those marks have meaning!  
 236  
 237 R – It's fantastic to see. You know and she's, cos we put letters on the fridge, some magnetic  
 238 letters and you know, try and involve her as well. And again, what I love about this place is  
 239 they don't, they don't think you're only three or two and a half, you can't possibly be  
 240 learning letters or sounds or all the rest of it, they're doing their phonics, they're doing their  
 241 sign language. They are so, they are both so advanced. Now the difficulty is I'll imagine  
 242 you'll have is the differences between looking at the home environment plus school and  
 243 seeing what and how that balances.  
 244  
 245 I – Yes.



246  
 247 R – Because we’ve always done a lot at home as well. But it’s just, it’s back to, again I think  
 248 it goes back to the sort of responsibility of what the children are interested in and following  
 249 what their interests are and treating them as having the capacity to learn this stuff from a very  
 250 early age and not thinking you just play with a doll or a truck. You know, that’s what I really  
 251 like about this place. They stretch the children.  
 252  
 253 I – By valuing that play?  
 254  
 255 R – Absolutely! And I think that that’s the thing. The way they do it here isn’t sort of  
 256 learning by rote and you know standing up. Back in the day when we used to learn and  
 257 things “here it is on the blackboard”  
 258  
 259 I – Yes.  
 260  
 261 R – And obviously we, the interesting thing is as parents of course we’re not here during the  
 262 day to see exactly how they do it but you get enough snippets but they do it in such a way  
 263 that it doesn’t feel onerous or a chore or a lesson. They just get it. And again language and  
 264 just being able to do basic signing of things and understanding that there are children who  
 265 can’t read or hear or whatever it is. It all comes down to this understanding communication.  
 266 And what communication means and I just, yeah, it’s a very nurturing environment in that  
 267 respect.  
 268  
 269 I – Thank you. So you’re going to design a perfect environment to help speech and language  
 270 development. What are the three most important elements for you?  
 271  
 272 R – Ae we talking about the physical environment?  
 273  
 274 I – Yes.  
 275  
 276 R – So I think, I think even in these days of electronic everything and computers, just having  
 277 books around and words on the wall and having that visually represented in places is really  
 278 important, just because it then starts to give kids a familiarity with things and understanding  
 279 what those sounds are. I mean, I’m kind of a DIY inventor. I love the idea of just making  
 280 stuff but there’s something for me.....If I had to come up with a, so the phonics things with  
 281 the sounds, like th, sh and ch and all the rest of it. I would have thought it wouldn’t have  
 282 been too difficult to have almost like a big thing on the wall with big push buttons where you  
 283 basically press the button with C H on it, it lit up and went “ch” “ch”. That’s’ got to be  
 284 doable. I mean if it doesn’t exist that has to exist. I mean I can imagine that. If you were to  
 285 say my perfect environment, you could do that and you could actually have all the letters as  
 286 well so the children could press the relative buttons and make their words through phonics.  
 287  
 288 I – So you’re talking about that from, that’s from an indoor perspective?  
 289  
 290 R – Yes. That would be an indoor perspective.  
 291  
 292 I – So is your perfect environment indoors?  
 293  
 294 R – Not necessarily. I mean I...perfect environment is a really hard one because I think the  
 295 beauty of this is that they learn communication and language through so many different

296 media so it doesn't matter to me if you're putting sticks together outside on the floor in the  
297 wood to make a letter or a sound, or to do something....I think, I think the absolutely critical  
298 thing in all of this is keeping the children interested and engaged. So whatever mechanism  
299 you use to do it, if they are interested and engaged and want to explore it...whether that is  
300 outside, inside, you know with fluorescent paint on a wall, using sound, it doesn't matter so  
301 long as it's exciting to them and I think it's that sense of curiosity that children sort or  
302 innately have which you need to tap into.

303  
304 I – So it's a variety of resources?

305  
306 R – It's a variety of resources you know. I think you can't pinpoint one thing. There are  
307 loads of ideas for all sorts of different things and I guess probably an awful lot of them are  
308 deployed here but I think as soon as you start getting into a very trammel, dictatorial, this is  
309 how we do it, it becomes routine and it becomes inherently boring. Especially for children.  
310 You know, these got attention spans of a gnat a lot of the time so you've got to keep doing  
311 things and keep them interested. So I don't think it matters how you do it as long as there's  
312 that constant variety in interest and curiosity. Difficult to say what the perfect environment  
313 would be. I think it's a multiplicity of stimulus.

314  
315 I – Fantastic! Thank you. Last question, you'll be pleased to know! So what does a quality  
316 environment feel like to you? So you know when you're looking for a new home, you walk  
317 through the door and it just feels right?

318  
319 R – Yeah

320  
321 I – How does that make you feel?

322  
323 R – I think you get it every time you walk in here to be honest for me. We've been into  
324 different environments where you don't see it. So when you walk in, at any time of the day  
325 it's, you've got pockets of children usually doing different things. There's always a bit of  
326 chatter. There's always noise. There's always a bit of hubbub. That says to me that the  
327 children are excited and interested and doing things and engaged. You know, they're not  
328 sitting quietly. And there's a time for sitting quietly obviously and that needs to be part of  
329 the day but there is always variety. You know if you were to just take a helicopter view you'd  
330 see some kids doing stuff in the sand pit, you'd see some kids reading in the snuggle den,  
331 you'd see some kids doing flour and you'd see a phonics things going over in the corner.  
332 You'd see this variety of stimulus and there is this palpable excitement and support. I mean,  
333 you know, again, we're quite judgemental of people actually and whether that's teachers and  
334 all the rest of it. It can be a bad thing but you, I suppose everybody wants what's best for  
335 their children but then there's never been a time in the four and a half years of being here  
336 that we've seen or observed any interaction between the staff here and a child which has  
337 made us to the (sucks in breath through teeth) thing.

338  
339 I – Right. So you're comfortable? It makes you feel comfortable?

340  
341 R – I mean literally 100%. We, and I think, the trust we have in this place that they, they  
342 actually love the children in their care. And it goes beyond just your paid service and looking  
343 after the children, and you drop them off and pick them up there is a lot of, you know, actual  
344 social care for these children. They love them. And it's nice to see, again, in the year that we  
345 live in, it's nice to see them being able to give cuddles and hugs and support and look after

346 them and play and not be hampered. I think this hands off schooling at all levels is awful.  
347 And unfortunately it's the .001% of teaching staff who have abused that position that gets  
348 blown out of all proportion and means that everybody suffers and actually these children are  
349 so young. They need that almost sort of parental care. So, so you have that as the bedrock of  
350 the institution which is they are loved and supported and looked after, which is so important,  
351 but then there's a level of patience these guys have! I couldn't do this job. I mean, my God!  
352 You know, that's the thing. This sort of eternal patience and understanding of the children  
353 and actually sort of acting in their best interests. If they ever do, you don't really see it, so  
354 they're always there for them and it is that we have, especially having seen how Bs come  
355 through it, we couldn't be happier. I mean we've had. I know that there a plenty of mums  
356 who like to stay at home and all the rest of it , but we've sort of made a point of saying to all  
357 our friends, some of whom have commented "that's very early to send them to pre-school."  
358 It's like, they get so much more out of it than they ever would at home when it comes down to  
359 this stimulus and resources and patience thing. I don't believe, unless you are super human,  
360 that a father or a mother, or both, at home with their children, with the domestic stuff you've  
361 got to do as well, can possible give a child the range of experiences that, practically  
362 professional experiences, that they get here. You know, and that kind of development of  
363 language, the fact that they are speaking to probably 20 people in a day, and lots of different  
364 adults, has to be a good thing for them. Or I would have thought. So that's why for us, you  
365 know, it's never been about sort of getting them off our hands so we can have time. This is  
366 actually the best thing for their development.

367  
368 I – Yes.

369  
370 R – So it's a no brainer for us really. So, yes, this place is for us the perfect environment.

371  
372 I – Thank you so much!

373  
374 R – Pleasure!

375  
376  
377  
378

- 1 **Phase One - Setting Four – Practitioner Interview. (PA2, S4)**
- 2 Role – Nursery practitioner - female. Previously qualified as a secondary school teacher in
- 3 South Africa but decided not for her. Now working in early years – has done a short course
- 4 and waiting to find out if she needs to do any qualifications specifically in early years.
- 5 Works with 2 – 5 year olds.
- 6 I = interviewer
- 7 R = respondent
- 8
- 9 I – So what I want to do first, and what I'd like you to do, is give me a definition of what you
- 10 think different environments are. Ok. I'm looking at three environments. The indoor
- 11 classroom, outdoor classroom and natural environment, so forest school type of environment.
- 12 Those three different categories. So imagine I'm an alien and I know nothing about any
- 13 environment. How would you describe to me, first of all, what an indoor classroom was?
- 14 R – Just give me a minute to think!
- 15 I – Yes, yeah – no worries!
- 16 R – Well to me, I think indoor should be a bit of a quieter environment. Slightly more
- 17 stimulating. Not taking away from the other environment but more literacy, more writing,
- 18 that kind of thing. More smaller activities compared to the outdoor environment.
- 19 I – OK
- 20 R – Ya, just to get their reading and writing. Maybe a bit better staff interaction. Maybe get
- 21 more involved. Ya.
- 22 I – Fantastic. And the outdoor classroom?
- 23 R – I'd say the outdoor would be a bit louder and a bit more activity driven.
- 24 I – Activity as in physical activity?
- 25 R – Physical activity and you could bring in different activities like I know we've got writing
- 26 outside as well but bigger so you've got chalks on the floor and chalks on the walls and that
- 27 kind of thing.
- 28 I – Yes. Generally more space?
- 29 R – More space to run around and get all their energy out.
- 30 I – On a bigger scale?
- 31 R – Ya, ya.
- 32 I – Ok. And then the natural environment? Or forest school?

33 R – That's even bigger, so!!!! (laughter) Ya. That's more focussing on the natural so going  
 34 into the natural environment such as insects and things you'd get outdoors, and trees and that  
 35 kind of thing. It introduces tool work and I'd say that's really important. Safety. Safety is a  
 36 big one. Why we can't go into the fire circle and....

37 I – Right, yes. So you've got boundaries before you start?

38 R – Ya. I would say that would be one of the main learning aspects of the forest to me. Ya.

39 I – Yes. But do they still take risks? You're talking about tools and fire so...

40 R – I know! The pre-school at the moment have taken up the risk of climbing trees!

41 I – Right!

42 R – We've got a den and let's see how far they can go and it will mean that they are going up  
 43 and up!

44 I – Does that make you uncomfortable?

45 R – Yes! There's definitely lots of risks in the forest! Ya, which you probably wouldn't get  
 46 from the indoors.

47 I – Fantastic. Thank you. So with regards to playing and learning what do you think makes  
 48 these environments quality? So how would you, what would you think was a quality indoor  
 49 environment?

50 R – Ummm (thinking time)

51 I – You talked about stimulation. You need lots of things I suppose to provide that  
 52 stimulation?

53 R – Yes. And a variety. One child will do it differently to another..

54 I – Yes. So following children's interests?

55 R – I think change sometimes. If you always have the same toys then it can get a bit  
 56 repetitive. Change in that environment can be good.

57 I – Yes. And what about the outdoors? That outdoor classroom? What makes that quality?

58 R – I'd say the same. It would need different variety of resources. I keep on going back to  
 59 that! (laughter)

60 I – No, that's fine. That's fine! So, it's no good just having a blank space is it? You've got  
 61 to have stuff to do!

62 R – Ya. I think the staff interactions also make quality. I know sometimes I step back and  
 63 watch. I think you need to know when to step in and when to help them extend their learning  
 64 and how the staff members extend their learning is quality.

65 I – And what about the natural environment? What makes that quality?

66 R – Oh, that’s a tough one! (laughter)

67 I – So, if you went to a blank farmers field. That’s a natural environment isn’t it? But that  
68 wouldn’t necessarily be a quality natural environment. What would I need to do to that  
69 environment to make that quality?

70 R – I would say, having, actually having the resources there so if you have no trees there’s no  
71 trees to climb and if there’s no insects then you can’t talk about it. You would need nature  
72 (laughter). I’ve never actually thought about the environment! (thinking time) Ya. I think  
73 it’s the resources and you know, that space. If it wasn’t big you wouldn’t be able to.....

74 I – OK – so we need a big space? And nature? And natural resources?

75 R – Ya

76 I – And you’ve talked a lot about trees and forests. So you need somewhere that’s got a  
77 variety of natural resources?

78 R – Ya. I would say that they’re more interested in the nature part of forest school rather than  
79 the things we bring into it.

80 I – Yes.

81 R – I think we have stuff, we takes books and stuff

82 I – You take books?

83 R – Yes. So if it’s winter we’ll link the weather to, we’ll read about it. So I think that link to  
84 what we’ve got going on at that moment is also really good. It’s relevant.

85 I – So talking about the current situation and their interests?

86 R – Ya.

87 I – So you take books? Do you take other resources with you?

88 R – We’ve got spades up there. At the moment we’ve got a balancing rope. It’s like a strip  
89 that they can balance on.

90 I – Oh, ok.

91 R – That’s about it. The rest is natural. Ya.

92 I – And they find things to do though, with those natural things, don’t they?

93 R – Ya. At the moment it’s superheroes and wizards and they act it out in the trees around  
94 them. Ya

95 I – So that space is there to foster that imagination?

96 R – Ya

97 I – Fantastic! Ok. Thank you! So can you tell me then what you think is a quality  
 98 environment with regards to helping speech and language develop? What things to you need  
 99 to help speech and language?

100 R – Communication I'd say. Modelling language. If a kid's having trouble I'd say, a lot of  
 101 language, and even for other children

102 I – For peers as well as staff?

103 R – Yes. I'd say their play would help with communication. I've seen a lot of kids talking  
 104 with one another and they learn new words. "Oh what's that? I've never heard of that  
 105 before." I'd say their peers will also help with that. I would say the resources can help with  
 106 communication. Reading books. Writing. And story scribing. They're instructing the  
 107 different parts of the stories. Ya.

108 I – Yes. Have you observed different kinds of speech in different situations? Do children in  
 109 certain areas speak more than others?

110 R – Ya I'd say so. I'd say when they are in a large group there's a lot more speech there, I  
 111 would say generally. I'd say they talk about more outside as well.

112 I – Right

113 R – With lots of team work going on with how they're going to build something and then  
 114 they may all talk to one another. Also I'd say compromising. At the moment we've got a lot  
 115 of xxxxx (32:30) and that alters speech and giving their points across.

116 I – Yes definitely XXXXX

117 R – And then we've got a lot of roleplay. I say that would help.

118 I – Right yes.

119 R – Giving them a different..."so I'm the mum today so...."

120 I – And the same with superheroes! That imagination!

121 R – Yes. That imagination really helps them to communicate. Sometimes if they, if they had  
 122 a hard time with their mum today before they came, then that really comes out

123 I – Yes

124 R – What they're feeling! Ya.

125 I – Fantastic, thank you! So, if you're going to design a perfect environment to help speech  
 126 and language develop, what would be the three most important things for you within that  
 127 environment?

128 R – Quality staff would be the first one. Resources...

129 I – I knew you were going to say that!! (laughing)

130 R – And the third one, I'd say peer interactions.

131 I – Where would your perfect environment be? Or would it be a mix of them all?

132 R – I would say a mix. Ya. I think there are children who go from inside to outside and that  
 133 gives a wide, a wider range of what they can do and I think they learn a lot more than just  
 134 being in one environment.

135 I – So that free-flow between...

136 R – Yes, definitely. At one point they want to read. You can take books outside but then  
 137 they may not want to go outside so I would say both.

138 I – Fantastic! Last question – what does a quality environment feel like to you? So you  
 139 know when you step through a nursery door, or you are looking to buy a new house. You  
 140 step through the door and people say it just feels right. How does that make you feel?

141 R – Well I'd say if the kids were happy that would be one of the most telling

142 I – Yeah. And does that make you happy?

143 R – Yes! (laughter) Ya. Smiling faces and I think if things are happening, if the kids were  
 144 learning, if they were doing stuff, if they were engaged in whatever they had chosen to do.

145 I – So how does it make you feel, that quality environment?

146 R – Well, as I say, if I wouldn't really need to step in then the environment would be quite  
 147 good. The environment would be giving what the children need.

148 I – Step in as in get involved?

149 R – Ya. So in theory they wouldn't need an adult for the children to learn. I'd say that would  
 150 be quality. That would be a quality environment. Ya, ya.

151 I – That's absolutely fine. That's brilliant. Thank you so much.

152

153

154



1 **Phase One - Setting Four – Parent Interview. (PA3, S4)**

2 Role – Mum to A (daughter) aged 3. Only child. Will be 4 in June and is due to go to school  
3 although not happy with school allocation so considering holding her back a year. Has been  
4 at this setting since September (7 months) when funding became available. Looked around  
5 lots of settings before choosing this one.

6 I = interviewer

7 R = respondent

8

9 I – So the first thing that I'm going to ask you is if you could define for me please, what you  
10 think is an indoor classroom, an outdoor classroom and a natural environment or a forest  
11 school. So imagine I'm an alien and knew nothing about those. How would you explain  
12 them?

13 R – An indoor classroom would be, for me, a home..not a home setting but somewhere in  
14 between a home and a school setting where they would have lots of opportunities for play,  
15 creative space, books. You know somewhere where they would feel comfortable to explore  
16 but it's enclosed.

17 I – Yes

18 R – An outdoor environment. Exactly the same opportunities to learn. So lots of outdoor  
19 opportunities to play so water, sand. That natural sort of resources. Still the same....

20 I – But exposed to the elements??

21 R – Yeah exactly! Indoor would be more kind of homely I guess but ...that's the only way I  
22 can describe what I'm trying to think. But...

23 I – Yeah, that's fine!

24 R – But more kind of cosy but still have all the opportunities to learn and explore, But  
25 outdoor would be more, you know, air and fresh air and running about but still lots of  
26 opportunities to play and explore in the environment that they're in.

27 I – Fantastic!

28 R – And the natural environment would be say like a forest school, which hasn't really been  
29 touched by sort of commercial or kind of man-made structures. It's all kind of rustic and  
30 natural. Totally natural environment.

31 I – So regards to those three environments what would you say makes them quality? We can  
32 start with the indoors and go through them all.

33 R – So indoor, I would say, obviously the setting they're in. So, you know, heat and make  
34 sure it's warm and it's not unsafe in any way but also that they have lots of resources. Not

35 too many resources that it's absolutely, that they're going to go sprouting from one thing to  
 36 another all the time but things that they can really use imaginatively. You know, I'm not a  
 37 big fan of lots of plastic toys. I like things that they can see and go "right I'm going to use  
 38 this as something completely different"

39 I - - Yes. Open ended?

40 R - Yes. Things that they can use to further their imagination and to bring them together as  
 41 well, that they can use as a team and not just as individuals. So yeah, so lots of you know the  
 42 basics. Running water, that sort of thing. But lots of resources that they can use in different  
 43 ways. And then outdoors, again I would say safety. Making sure it's contained and in a safe  
 44 environment. And again lots of opportunities to discover outdoors. So you know water,  
 45 sand, plants, animals..

46 I - So natural resources?

47 R - Natural resources, I would expect. I think most of what I think is, is good in a learning  
 48 environment is more natural and not sort of plastic and...more gives them the opportunity to  
 49 go and discover it and for it to be what they want it to be.

50 I - Yeah

51 R - Yeah, and then a forest school environment, as I say as little man-made interference as  
 52 possible. Just the environment. But safe! (laughter) They can't be running off into a ditch  
 53 or....

54 I - So there's boundaries?

55 R - Yes. Absolutely!

56 I - Do you think they need to take risks though?

57 R - Yes. Yes I'm a firm believer that they need to learn. They need to take, if you don't take  
 58 a risk then you'll never know what the outcome is going to be and I think if you know, you  
 59 know we always let A go a certain way within the boundaries and she will learn. I think their  
 60 confidence grows as well through risk taking. You're more likely to think you can do things  
 61 and give things a go and I think that's, you know, great and I think that does come through  
 62 taking those risks and allowing them to grow.

63 I - So that environment has to have those opportunities?

64 R - Yes absolutely. Yes, you know, in the woods climbing a tree or, you know, because  
 65 that's how you learn. It's how you grow. So, yeah, it's definitely considered risks but risks  
 66 should be in there definitely. I think in probably in all of those environments, within reason.

67 I - Ok fantastic, thank you. So can you tell me then what in your opinion is a quality  
 68 environment with regards to helping speech and language?

69 R – Lots of opportunity to sort of interact with children, and adults as well. I think it's  
70 important to know how to interact with adults as much as how to interact with your peers of  
71 your own age group. So, yeah, lots of opportunity to do that. I think activities that are  
72 designed to kind of encourage team work and you know communication with each other but  
73 also I do think it's important to have the opportunity to play on your own. To be ok with  
74 your own space and your own, being alone. You know on your own and working things out  
75 on your own. So I think it needs to have a mixture of that. Being able to go off and roam and  
76 do your own thing.

77 I – So do you think that space, that quiet space, to be able to do that?

78 R – Yeah, definitely. I think you know I'm a big fan of reading areas, you know, where you  
79 can be cosy. If you need a bit of time out, you can go and you can take yourself away from  
80 the craziness but in outdoor spaces as well I think it's nice to have, you know, a kind of snug  
81 area where you can just sit and you can watch what everybody else is doing. I think you  
82 learn a lot through observing and that's not always taking part. It's sitting somewhere quietly  
83 and watching what other people are doing. So, yes, I think in those environments we  
84 definitely do need those quiet spaces, to take you away, read a book, watch what everyone's  
85 doing.

86 I – We need that as adults as well sometimes don't we?

87 R – Yes. Absolutely! I think as well, you look at children and we treat them so differently to  
88 the way that you would treat an adult and often you don't give them the slack that you would  
89 an adult but they are just mini-adults.

90 I – Yes. We don't want that stimulation all the time do we?

91 R – Exactly. Yes. Sometimes you need quiet, so...absolutely. I think those spaces are really  
92 important but giving them the opportunity to communicate effectively with each other. You  
93 know, that's...and I think as well, having the adults there that will be able to kind of, step in  
94 in the right way to bad communication. So, you know, I'm not a big fan of telling children  
95 off all the time but I think it's more important to kind of discuss why we don't behave in a  
96 certain way and explain to them why we don't behave in that way. Especially things like  
97 sharing or, you know, taking it in turns. I think that needs to be dealt with in the right way so  
98 having those people there that can kind of step in and say "well we don't do this and we don't  
99 do that and this is why" I think that's important. So yeah, those are the sort of the main  
100 things in those settings. But also technology as well. I think you do need to have an element  
101 of technology in a setting even though I would just prefer to throw computers and everything  
102 else out of the window (laughter) and say "that's it, you're having a totally natural  
103 upbringing!" to prepare them for the future they do need that from a young age and  
104 communication isn't just one to one, it is with technology as well so I do think you have to  
105 have a certain element of that from a younger age. Not just in front of a TV or in front of a  
106 computer but you need a balanced, and know how to communicate in that way as well. So,  
107 yeah, for me those would be the main things

108 I -So you are going to design the perfect environment to promote speech and language. What  
 109 are the three most important things for you?

110 R – Different spaces. So having the ability to go from indoor to outdoor. Havign the natural  
 111 environment as well.

112 I – That free flow between those different environments?

113 R – Yes absolutely! To be able go to between one and the other and just simultaneously use  
 114 them all. That would be perfect for me. And the right resources really, as I said before.

115 I – Not your plastic!

116 R – Not plastic, no! I've got nothing against, well I have got stuff against plastic!! (laughter)  
 117 You know, it's just they fit you into a box of what you're going to do with that, with that  
 118 piece of equipment rather than just, you know, giving you a cardboard box and you can be an  
 119 astronaut or you can be a bus driver or you could be, and so I think it's important to have  
 120 those resources that you can use for anything. So, yeah, definitely. Those sort of resources  
 121 that, as well as the outdoor resources, that can be used for you know for similar activities and  
 122 that kind of thing. I've got to think of three! (laughter)

123 I – So you've got environment and resources. What's your third!

124 R – I want to say the people. But I also want to say books and things as well.

125 I – But that could come in with your resources!

126 R – Yes that could come into resources!

127 I – I'll let you have that! (laughter)

128 R – Yeah people I think. Having the right people there. The people that, you know, know  
 129 how to get the best out of children and know how to let them be their own people and to also  
 130 be able to notice when children need their space and their quiet time. I meet a lot of people  
 131 that kind of think that people should be a certain way all the time but we're not always in that  
 132 state. So I think it's important to have the people that recognise when children need to be in  
 133 their quiet state, or when they need to be out doing lots of different things with their peers.  
 134 So yes, definitely having those people that know what is best for children within those  
 135 settings and also that do the research. The people that know what is the best thing at this  
 136 moment in time for children. That's really important I think.

137 I – Thank you. Last question. This question is, what does a quality environment feel like to  
 138 you? So you said you walked round and went round quite a lot of nurseries. When you  
 139 experienced quality, when you walked in here, how did it make you feel?

140 R – Relaxed. Relaxed I think. Feeling that they're going to be ok when you leave them.  
 141 When you leave your children with anyone, I think especially me, I had never left A with  
 142 anyone apart from family who had very similar ideas of how to look after children. I'm not

143 saying I'm right all the time but that's the way I choose to bring A up and so finding a setting  
144 that had very similar ideas to me, it made me feel far more relaxed. And knowing as well  
145 that when she comes in she loves it. You know, I have to convince her to come out. That  
146 makes us feel horrible (laughter) but it also means that I can "ok"

147 I – Yes. So you feel comfortable?

148 R – Yes. Absolutely comfortable and I think that's the most important thing when you pick a  
149 setting is that you know. So yeah, just relaxed and comfortable and knowing that they're  
150 going to be safe, that they're going to be ok and that their ideas are the same as yours.

151 I – Yes. That matching ideology.

152 R – Yes.

153 I – That's absolutely brilliant. Thank you. Thank you so much.

154

1 **Phase One - Setting Four – Practitioner Interview. (PA4, S4)**

2 Role – Female practitioner. Worked at setting for 2 years, 3 months. Works with 2 – 5 year  
3 olds, covering all environments

4 I = interviewer

5 R = respondent

6

7 I – So first of all what I'm going to ask you to do is define for me what you think an indoor  
8 classroom is, an outdoor classroom is and a natural environment is? So I'm differentiating  
9 between the three. Indoor, outdoor and natural, so forest school type.

10 R – Yeah, yeah.

11 I – So imagine I know nothing about any of them. Tell me what you think I should know  
12 about it! What's an indoor classroom?

13 R – Well you'd have to have the different areas set out to carry on with their interests sort of  
14 thing. So you'd have the block station so they can take what they want to take from there and  
15 then you've got the loose parts and things. They sort of do transporting really with the loose  
16 parts, kind of more child led really. And then we've got mark making. So I'd say inside  
17 would be more, not calm, but more quieter and you know, less physical. There will be more  
18 sit down doing things. And then outside you would have more of the, you know, the obstacle  
19 courses. More of the gross motor skills of the physical development I'd say. Outside you've  
20 got big tyres, big reels where they can make obstacle courses and they explore it in that way.

21 I – So would you say there's more space in an outdoor classroom?

22 R – Yes. Definitely. A lot more space. They obviously do more physical, gross motor skills  
23 of physical. So they that bit more space to explore whatnot, and then I'd say forest school,  
24 more outdoor learning. I'd say more natural so, you've got all the mud and potions and  
25 they're digging up for like worms and.....we do some of the fires and we do some tool work  
26 as well but it gives them that opportunity to explore more of the natural with the trees and the  
27 grass and all that kind of natural things.

28 I – Lovely. Thank you. So, again, separating those three environments, what would you say  
29 makes each of those quality? So firstly what would you say is generally a quality indoor  
30 environment?

31 R – Calm and with your stations set out so they're not too busy. So that's more inviting to  
32 them.

33 I – So not too many resources?

34 R – Yeah. So, not too many and but then not too little that it's going to come across boring  
35 and they don't want to explore that area, kind of thing. Outside obviously you want more of

36 the resources available so then there's more for them to explore and add into their play  
37 outside.

38 I – So when you say more resources available, do you mean more variety?

39 R – Yeah, like more open ended because we've also got like the reels and the tyres. We've  
40 got the guttering and they can take anything from that really and they make their obstacle  
41 courses for their cars and they've got more open ended out of that. I think that the forest  
42 school is quite similar. They've got their stations set and they just take from it what they,  
43 they need.

44 I – Say with forest school, if we're looking at it really broadly as a natural environment,  
45 would you say like a farmer's field would be a quality natural environment?

46 R – Yeah, definitely. There's a lot of space isn't there?

47 I – So space is important as far as quality is concerned?

48 R – Yes definitely yeah. I'm not sure about S's (the forest school that the pre-school group  
49 uses) but our forest school is quite stretched back. We've got our areas and they kind of  
50 explore them. There isn't anything necessarily set out. They kind of just add into it what  
51 they want.

52 I – Right, yes. No man-made resources then?

53 R – No. No, we take like water down for potions but we kind of just put it next to the water  
54 station and sometimes it might not stay there. It might go to the open ended section, you  
55 know things like that. It's all about letting them take out whatever they want from it.

56 I – You said about S's. Have you got two forest school sites then?

57 R – Yes

58 I – Oh right!

59 R – Yes, so S's is more..they go up to the top of the ridge

60 I – That's where they go in the minibus?

61 R – Yes. So she's, hers is a lot bigger space in the woods. So she's got a big space and theirs  
62 is more of a permanent site whereas we go to the village centre and that can be rented out to  
63 anybody but we've still got our bits in there, if that makes sense. It's just a bit...for toddlers  
64 it's a nice area but it's not, you know you don't walk in and go "corr, there's so much space"  
65 and they don't know what to do, where to go and it's not scary as a big space.

66 I – Is the village centre next door?

67 R – Yes.

68 I – So they haven't got to walk so far?

69 R – Yes. It's just out behind the car park so they go down there. We can use that any day of  
70 the week really.

71 I – Right. Do the older children go there as well?

72 R – Yeah. Yeah. In the week if they wanted to do...the other day they wanted to make pirate  
73 flags but they didn't have any sticks, big sticks to do it with so they went down the village  
74 centre and just collected some big stick. They went around the village to collect big sticks so  
75 that they could do their pirate flags.

76 I – Gorgeous! Ok! Thank you. So what in your opinion then do you think is a quality  
77 environment with regards to helping speech and language? So we've looked at it generally  
78 now. What do you think makes it quality as far as speech and language is concerned?

79 R – I'm not really sure. I don't really know that much into the speech and language to try  
80 and bring that on but I'd say that in the areas that you've got an adult they can be modelling  
81 that language. And with counting, if they're building a tower, you can be modelling the  
82 language of counting, 1,2, so bringing it on in that way, I'd say. It may, we've got signs and  
83 things of what the area is. I know that they're not going to be reading it but there is still  
84 going to be speech and language. Yeah so that modelling it back all the time. I suppose you  
85 don't really, when you're in the setting, if you're doing it, you don't take in how much you  
86 are doing it. It's when you sit back and have to explain when you're doing it. You just do it  
87 all the time!

88 I – It just comes naturally?

89 R – Yes! If you've got somebody that's got limited speech but they're trying their hardest,  
90 you kind of pick at it to try and bring out what they are trying to say then it's "yeah! That's  
91 what they were trying to say!"

92 I – Do you notice that children speak differently or more in certain areas to others?

93 R – I'd definitely say like, with the boys that are more physical and more active, they're  
94 outside more of the time and their speech probably comes on so much more when they are  
95 doing what they enjoy. Whereas the girls who are probably a bit more quiet, they'll probably  
96 be in the book area having stories read to them and they are a little bit more reserved and  
97 they'll speak when they want to speak.

98 I – So it's those children's interests?

99 R – Yeah I'd definitely say it goes on the children's interests. If you've got something that's  
100 between the two then I'd say it leads to average, sort of speaking averagely and then I  
101 suppose when you're working with it you just, you just know don't you? It's hard to strip it  
102 down. But yeah I'd say that the, the boys that are more physical and more active that,  
103 They're the ones that are roleplaying outside, like pirates and you know, that kind of thing.  
104 They've got more of an interest in that and they bring that into their play.



105 I – So that quality environment then needs to provide those resources to enable them to  
 106 engage in that kind of play then doesn't it?

107 R – Yes definitely.

108 I – You know that, like with the pirates you said you went out and got the sticks

109 R – Yeah. And that went on for days. Those groups of boys, you know. Some of them are  
 110 in full time and then you've got the ones that are in normally three days out of five but the  
 111 ones that are in full time were like "oh this is what we did, shall we do it with you?" You  
 112 know, and it carried on into a whole different, you know, it's different with one child

113 I – But you enabled that by going to find those resources. So would you say those resources  
 114 are important in that environment?

115 R – Yeah definitely. But if the resources aren't there then I wouldn't say that that's got to  
 116 stop that play. Like they did with the sticks. We went out and provided them, those  
 117 resources, so if it is something that can be provided there and then, then I'd say that you've  
 118 got to go with that. So they said "can we go and get the sticks". So if they wanted, I don't  
 119 know, like if they wanted to collect grass to make a, a real life picture of the garden or  
 120 something, then you'd go out and facilitate that opportunity as well and I think that that can  
 121 bring on their speech as well. They're asking for it, expressing their opinions, their ideas and  
 122 what they're wanting to do in their play.

123 I – Fantastic. Thank you. Right, so you're going to design the perfect environment with a  
 124 particular focus of helping children's speech and language. What are going to be the three  
 125 most important things for you within that environment and wherever that environment is?  
 126 Three top things you want?

127 R – Well me, I like being crafty and getting messy and I like the forest school, the more  
 128 natural side of things. I also like the open ended bits, so like the tyres and the reels and how  
 129 they explore that so I'd say for me, my perfect setting would be the forest school, the craft  
 130 and the open ended

131 I – And messy?

132 R – Yes the messy stuff!! (laughter) I'm always messy!!

133 I – Fantastic! Last question! This question is a bit different and it's asking what does a  
 134 quality environment feel like to you? So you know when you walk through a door, say if  
 135 you're looking around to buy a new house, or you're looking around nurseries? People say  
 136 they walk through the door and it just felt right.

137 R – Yeah!

138 I – What does that feel like to you?

139 R – Just, you want to walk into an area that’s just, say if I was coming to look around if I had  
140 a child that wanted to start at the setting, you just want a calm environment. Not too much  
141 going on. An adult is with the children and engaging. That’s a big thing, I’d say, for me,  
142 seeing the adults engaging in the different areas and asking questions and things like that.  
143 That the area’s neat. Not necessarily neat but explored and not a chaotic mess on the floor  
144 and you’re thinking “oh my God, who’s going to clear that up?”

145 I – You’re thinking “not me!!!”

146 R- (laughter) Yeah – I’d say that’s a big thing.

147 I – Does that calmness end up being transferred to you? Do you end up feeling calm as well?

148 R – Yeah! I think sometimes, during the more hectic stages of our days, like before  
149 mealtimes when you’re trying to get them to wash their hands before they sit down  
150 sometimes you just feel like “eehhhhh” and then you have that calmness when they’ve sat  
151 down and it’s like “corrr” and it can be quite chaotic sometimes and it’s just “ahhhh” and  
152 you don’t know where they’re going. So it’s just having that routine I’d say and that  
153 structure as well so that they know that points today.

154 I – So that routine and structure at certain times?

155 R – Yeah, so obviously it’s free flow all the time and we don’t have any set things but then  
156 you have got the set group time and the set meal time that all the free-flow kind of goes into  
157 that and they’re kind of “ooohhhh” and sometimes you have to bring it back in. You know  
158 with the toddlers we sit them down for group time and then we take 3 or 4 into the bathroom  
159 and get them to wash their hands, then they’ll sit down and we can take the rest of them and  
160 wash their hands and get them sat down so it doesn’t get that whole chaotic bit where you’re  
161 kind of “ahhhh” and you need five minutes to sit down, So it, sometimes you just can’t plan  
162 the day. You just don’t know how it’s going to plan out. Forest school days are more chaotic  
163 than others.

164 I – Yes. That whole getting ready, putting on your wellies and all that..

165 R – Yes. I think structure and routine is important.

166 I – And supports that calm environment?

167 R – Yes definitely.

168 I – Ok. Thank you so much.

169

1 **Phase One - Setting Four – Practitioner Interview. (PA5, S4)**

2 Role – Female practitioner, employed mainly as a forest school leader and outdoor leader.  
3 Has BPhil in Early Years. Worked in Switzerland as forest school leader with pre-school age  
4 and after school club prior to working at this setting. Worked at this setting for 2 weeks.

5 I = interviewer

6 R = respondent

7

8 I & R chatting before any questions were asked and R just started to describe her perfect  
9 setting, before any questions were asked (she was aware that the Dictaphone was recording).  
10 So without prompting:

11 R - To me a setting should be very much open to what their needs are, what their interests are  
12 and also adding things. You have to add things to give them a different perspective on things  
13 but to follow mainly their own interests, and having open ended activities as well so that  
14 they're able to use things in different ways, you know, it doesn't have to be a prescribed set  
15 way of doing things so to me that's the ideal sort of setting. And resources as well. You do  
16 need resources but it's not the be all and end all of everything because I think you can have  
17 too many sometimes. But that's the good thing about our forest because we have to, it is in  
18 an actual forest, the main forest school that we do with pre-school on a Thursday

19 I – Yes. The one where you get the minibus?

20 R – Yeah. We have to pack everything away so there isn't anything fixed down there. It's  
21 literally just a forest and that's it. Which actually I quite like because it shows you that you  
22 have to leave it as you found it as well.

23 I – Yes – it shows that respect for the environment?

24 R – Yes. And it's proper woodland there. They could just go off and get lost but we've got  
25 obviously boundaries that they stick to and they follow. There is a fire pit down there.  
26 That's the only thing that is fixed down there.

27 I – There is?

28 R – A fire pit. Yes. But apart from that there's nothing else down there so ....

29 I - Brilliant! So let's hold onto those thoughts for a minute and what I'd like you to do,  
30 before we start digging into what's quality, is define for me what you think, if I knew nothing  
31 about any of the environments, what would you say to me is an indoor classroom, what's an  
32 outdoor classroom and what's a natural environment? Explain to me as if I was an alien!

33 R – Ok. So an indoor classroom, if you came as an alien to the UK, would probably be,  
34 certainly in a pre-school it would have tables in there, chairs, quite fixed things that are on the  
35 tables and activities set up ready for the children to play with in the mornings when they

36 come in. An outdoor classroom again would have certain things set up but not as much set  
 37 up. I think they're able to access the resources out there themselves and create their own  
 38 learning experiences really. And then a natural environment again, like the forest school,  
 39 there is literally nothing set up and they have to think in a different way and think how  
 40 they're going to use the resources that they've got. They still play with sticks and they still  
 41 pay with mud but they haven't got all the toys and the equipment that is always prescribed to  
 42 be used in a certain way, whereas if it's totally natural they have to think differently and it's  
 43 not as prescriptive so they just literally, you can see different aspects of how they learn and  
 44 their language and all the rest of it because it's not something that they're using in a certain  
 45 way. So for me the natural environment is very, very different to anything else and that's  
 46 why I like forest school really. I'm biased though! (laughter)

47 I – So can you tell me then, so you've told me what you think those environments are, can  
 48 you tell me what makes them quality? What makes a quality environment? Again, the three  
 49 areas?

50 R - I think if you have too many prescribed activities where you want an outcome for  
 51 something, a very definitive sort of outcome, then I don't think that's overly quality because  
 52 you're almost dictating to how the outcomes should be and you're dictating to them what you  
 53 want to see, and that's your own...

54 I – Is that in all three environments?

55 R – Yes.

56 I – So not too prescriptive?

57 R – Not too prescriptive, no. Whereas I think if you have things that are open ended, I  
 58 suppose you've heard about the loose parts type work coming out. I think that is good within  
 59 an outside setting as well. And an indoor setting you can use those things. They're a bit  
 60 more open ended in how you use them. And then obviously forest school I think I like the  
 61 way we've got our forest school because it isn't set up in specific areas, you know when  
 62 there's a mud kitchen there, there isn't, you know it's not prescribed at all. There is logs and  
 63 things for den building and whatever but actually they just use them however they want to so  
 64 it's very much, literally, the stuff that's there really. So I quite like that idea.

65 I – So coming out without that gives that kind of freedom, it's open ended, nothing fixed. It's  
 66 that that gives the children the freedom to allow children to do what children want to do?

67 R – Yes definitely! You've got to observe them to see, and I think when doing that you can  
 68 see what their interests are then perhaps use that the next time to, you know, we bring, I mean  
 69 we do bring some resources with us. So we have like the tarpaulin. We've been using a  
 70 slack line so for balancing. We put that on the bottom of the tree so yeah. I introduced that  
 71 since I got here. And then a hammock we're going to bring. We've got a hammock which is  
 72 just a parachute. We're going to use that this week as well and see how we get on with that.  
 73 So we have got sort of different things that we can use, that we do bring down with us and we  
 74 just want to see how they use them and how they get on with them really. And also it can

75 creative sort of, you know, different play areas for them as well but again we pack it all away  
76 and bring it with us. We won't leave it down there.

77 I – Yes. What do you use for the slack line?

78 R – We bought it online actually so it's a proper, but I tell you what you can use which would  
79 be a cheaper alternative. You know the, you can get the suppliers to give them free to you,  
80 the things that they used to use to carry, to lift skips up with. The big long, they're sort of  
81 like belts.

82 I – Oh yeah! Like a seatbelt type fabric?

83 R – Yeah, yeah. I've seen that. I've seen a nursery where they've done that before. If you  
84 can get hold of them. They'd be like, you could actually get them for nothing. And they'd be  
85 good to use, and wrapping them around the trees. But it's getting the tension right you see  
86 because they go right down. The one we've got has got like a clip thing that you use. It's  
87 quite tough to use it, to tighten it and we have been struggling with it quite a bit but I think S  
88 is going to look for another one and see what else is online. But yeah it's good. It's going  
89 well. And their balance, it's going to be really good for their sensory...

90 I – So that kind of variety of experiences is very important as well?

91 R – Yes. Yes definitely. Just different things that they might not have used before. And  
92 experience which they don't in an indoor setting, would be, is very different to, you know, an  
93 outdoor setting. I think it's the fact that you wouldn't necessarily get the opportunity to sort  
94 of, to balance to that extent within the, you do get sort of, obviously people use crates like  
95 climbing materials and things but they tend to be more fixed so. I think sometimes when  
96 you're balancing on something that's very fixed it's very sturdy but you're not getting that,  
97 with the slack line you're getting sort of tension so actually you're able to use your balancing,  
98 it's a lot more tougher to use and we've got a guide rope to help them. You're almost helping  
99 them in a different way which is a good thing because I think a lot of children, especially in  
100 the uk, a lot of parents, not so much now but I think previously they used to be frightened of  
101 them hurting themselves.

102 I – I think they still are now

103 R – We've got a lot of that, you know, I think S has had a couple of issues with certain  
104 parents. It happens everywhere in settings.

105 I – Yes. It's just how it is

106 R – Yes

107 I – So you've kind of assessed and told me what you think is a quality environment for those  
108 three. What do you think makes a quality environment as far as speech and language is  
109 concerned?

110 R – As far as speech and language is concerned I think it's up to the practitioner to speak  
 111 with the children and engage with them. And if they notice something there that they are  
 112 interested in, to try and find out what they're doing and why they're doing it so, to see, you  
 113 know, what their view are on it. To try and support that language and to introduce new words  
 114 and new concepts so I think that that's very important as well. And you do find that,  
 115 certainly I find that outside a lot more because they're experiencing different things that  
 116 they're perhaps not used to, you do get that language a little bit more outside because they're  
 117 just seem to be a little bit more freer in a way I think to.....I don't know what it is. I think  
 118 with outdoors it just seems to be, because they haven't got so many materials to play with  
 119 they're not absorbed in playing with prescribed materials, I think that their language perhaps  
 120 does develop a lot more because they're talking to you to get things confirmed, or, you know,  
 121 trying to explain something to you and I think that does develop their language a lot more in a  
 122 different way. I'm not saying that indoors doesn't but I think sometimes indoors there can be  
 123 so many materials that are around that they are just playing with specific material and not  
 124 necessarily having to speak in a way. Whereas outdoors they're having to speak a little bit  
 125 more to confirm things and, you know, because there isn't as many resources that are  
 126 available to them, so I don't know if that is the case but it seems to me that that is, from my  
 127 experience.

128 I – So you obviously notice that speech is different

129 R – Yes I think so, definitely. Yes, I think....I think that also they end up supporting one  
 130 another in a different way because they're outside in a different environment they're having  
 131 to perhaps engage more with each other because there isn't perhaps, I don't know, a set game  
 132 or whatever that they can get absorbed in by themselves so maybe, it's because they haven't  
 133 got those resources they're having to think in a different way to play.

134 I – So there's more collaboration?

135 R – I think so! Definitely yes. That's what I notice anyway.

136 I – Fantastic! So if you were going to design the perfect environment to help speech and  
 137 language develop, what would be the three most important things for you?

138 R – That's good question! I think having opportunities to speak so, with forest school, we  
 139 tend to sit around the fire and we'll talk to each other and we'll do story telling. We tend to  
 140 do story time outside as a sort of getting everyone together and grouping people together at  
 141 the end. We've just started, and we're going to that a bit more, but like the helicopter stories.  
 142 So the children have got their own workbooks, I don't know whether you've seen those

143 I – The Vivian Gusen-Paley book? The helicopter stories?

144 R – No, no, no, it's basically where they scribe their own stories.

145 I – Yes!

146 R – So we've started to do that a lot more so I said to S (manager) that we perhaps need to  
147 initiate that more in forest school because they might end up with completely different sort of  
148 stories to how they see inside so we're going to do that I think a lot more down at forest  
149 school as well. So I think introducing that sort of story time around a sort of circle within the  
150 fire ring is quite good. Also things around cooking, you know cooking all the, because we  
151 tend to cook down there as well on the open fire so it's all the language related to that so I  
152 think that's important to have like a set time that you get them to come together and try and  
153 speak within a group and increase their confidence to do that, so that's important.

154 I – That time to talk?

155 R – Yes, that's right. Yes. That's important for me. I obviously think, I think it does help to  
156 have you know some sort of media things to use as well, so if you had tape recorders or  
157 things like that for the children to use freely I think you might capture their language in a  
158 different way so if they know that if they're speaking to somebody and they can hear it back,  
159 then sometimes they suddenly realise, you know, that this is something that I could use, you  
160 know something that is a little bit different and they don't realise what they're saying and  
161 then you play it back to them and they tend to enjoy that side of things through it so we could  
162 sort of introduce those either in the indoor setting or when the weather's better in the outdoor  
163 setting as well.

164 I – So technology?

165 R – Yeah, to help. Not too much though because I know that obviously ipads and phones and  
166 everything have become almost to the point where they're not talking because they're just  
167 watching a screen and playing on computer games and whatever where is doesn't require  
168 any language, so you need to get the ones, the programmes that do require speech or language  
169 really. And also within a group, building up friendships, sort of encouraging friendships as  
170 well. Trying to get the to play with one another and cooperate and giving them their own  
171 time to sort of...I think sometimes you can intervene too much in an argument as well and  
172 getting them to sort of you know encourage them to, well not encourage them but let them,  
173 see how the argument plays out so as long as they're not hurting one another it's sometimes  
174 good for them to fight their own battles and learn how to socialise in that way. I think that's  
175 very good for their language as well because they're having to, rather than just scream at one  
176 another they're having to try and co-operate. So for me that would be the most important  
177 things. Have I said three things yet? Is that alright?

178 I – You've said three, yes. Time to talk, that technology bit and the cooperative play  
179 opportunities.

180 R – Yes

181 I – Yes?

182 R – Yes. I'm happy with that! (laughter)

183 I – Last question. What does a quality environment feel like to you? So you know when you  
 184 look around a house, or go to a nursery setting? People walk through the door don't they, and  
 185 they say "it just feels right"?

186 R – Yeah.

187 I – What does that feel like to you?

188 R – I think where the children are engaged and absorbed in what they're doing. And they are  
 189 able to make those friendships relatively easily and they're not, you know, you're not  
 190 constantly interrupting their play so they're able to be a bit freer and have the....sometimes I  
 191 think, you know as an adult you can interrupt and you can change the structure of the play  
 192 completely or you might enter at a time when they've done something you haven't seen  
 193 what's gone on and you end up intervening and it changes the structure of the play or the way  
 194 they're playing completely because it's not something that you've contributed to earlier on,  
 195 so...

196 I – And how you see it could be completely different to....

197 R – Yes that's right! And sometimes you have to listen to them to see what they're saying  
 198 rather than the other way around, so rather than you constantly dictating everything so...

199 I – Yes. So if you walk through the door and find that those children are engaged and they've  
 200 got their friendships and they're playing and they've got that freedom....

201 R – Yes?

202 I – How does that make you feel?

203 R – I think it just makes you feel relaxed. You're not as anxious. I think when things are  
 204 kicking off all the time or somebody's constantly shouting at a child or saying no all the time  
 205 then it's, it's not....and I have worked in settings where it's been too structured and they're  
 206 not allowed to do anything for themselves and everything like nappy times is at a certain  
 207 times. And I know you have to have that a little bit ...

208 I – There does need to be an element of flexibility though?

209 R – Yeah. It can actually disrupt and actually S said today, we went to do the nappies at 11  
 210 but because they were enjoying being down outside so much with the toddlers, we're going to  
 211 delay it and let them play a bit longer and then do it a bit later. Which is a good idea, go with  
 212 what the day brings and not have a set thing, a set structure all the time.

213 I – And that makes everyone so much more relaxed?

214 R – Yeah I think so. If it feels relaxed then that's good because the previous setting I was at  
 215 it was just too, way too structured for me and I was in a school setting that was really good  
 216 and then I went to a different school and that was when it was too strict. The head was too  
 217 structured for me and I didn't enjoy it. They were going out but they didn't actually use me



218 for forest school, even though I was trained for forest school so it was bit odd really. So, but  
219 it was all very much, you know, like sort of the old style day care where everything was very,  
220 very structured to the point where they weren't even allowed to our their own drinks. There  
221 was no real sort of, you know, autonomy for anything and you just don't learn like that. You  
222 just don't. You just become a robot. So yeah I've known the difference between, they are  
223 completely different – thank God!

224 I – Thank you.

225 R – Is that alright?

226 I – Yes, that's fantastic! Thank you so much!

227

228

229

230

1 **Phase One - Setting Four – Practitioner Interview. (PA6, S4)**

2 Role – Female practitioner, manager of setting. Worked at this setting for 3-4 years. Covers

3 all environments and all age groups. Trained to level 3.

4 I = interviewer

5 R = respondent

6

7

8 I – So the first thing that I'd like you to do is to define these environments for me. So pretend

9 I know nothing about anything. I'm an alien – you know, how would you explain to me what

10 an indoor classroom is, what an outdoor classroom is and what a natural environment is?

11 Those three different environments.

12 R – Ok.

13 I – So what pops into your head when you think of an indoor classroom?

14 R – Indoor I would think it should be calmer than the outside so a nice calm environment. A

15 lot of mark making, messy play, kind of...I'd say indoor and outdoor are quite similar but

16 obviously outdoor I would say is just more, it's just louder where they can express

17 themselves a little bit more.

18 I – Would you expect the same kind of resources and the same kind of activities in both?

19 R – Yeah. Yeah I would do really because I think they need to be able to do all areas of the

20 curriculum wherever they feel comfortable really. Because you are talking about more

21 indoor children or more outdoor children. And a natural environment would be just lots of

22 natural resources. Very organic things. The same amount of staff really in those areas just

23 really observant and speaking to the children and listening to their needs and wants really.

24 I – Ok. Fantastic. Thank you. Now again with those three areas, tell me what you think

25 makes those quality?

26 R – Quality?

27 I – Yeah.

28 R – I think probably similar-ish things really. Like the staff really. They make it quality

29 because you could have the best of the best equipment and if you've got awful staff then it's

30 not really going to go anywhere, you know, like the best practitioner could have like a

31 cardboard box and make that into a quality interaction really. So I'd say the staff make it.

32 Yeah – so I'd say the staff make it really. How they interact with the children and how they

33 are able to follow on from that each individual child's needs really.

34 I – So you don't need anything else? Just staff?

35 R – (thinking time) Ummmm (laughter) well obviously you need the children and things but  
 36 I do think like, yeah, it's a really good member of staff. They can do anything really with any  
 37 child.

38 I – Yeah. Ok. So what do you think makes a quality environment as far as speech and  
 39 language is concerned?

40 R – Ok as far as speech and language is concerned I think probably having like the  
 41 knowledge, a few resources, obviously like books and again the knowledge of like singing  
 42 songs, things like, early communication is a lot about singing songs, rhyming, alliteration,  
 43 that kind of thing. Just everything you see really. You know you have signs everywhere and  
 44 letters everywhere and just talking about everything that you can kind of see in your  
 45 environment. Books, everything.

46 I – Yes. So you said resources. Any particular resources?

47 R – Ummmm

48 I – Any that you think are more conducive to a communication friendly environment?

49 R - Ummm, I can't think! I'm not so good under pressure!!!! Ummmm. Communication?  
 50 I've said about books haven't I? Books and songs....and obviously writing instruments,  
 51 mark making instruments, all that kind of thing really. Lots of tactile things, sensory things  
 52 for them to be able to, you know, write in different ways or make marks in different ways.

53 I – Yeah. Smashing. Thank you. So if you were going to design the perfect environment to  
 54 promote speech and language, what would be the three most important things that you would  
 55 put in that environment?

56 R – Three most important things, I would say.....I'm trying to picture in my head what I  
 57 would want! (laughter)

58 I – Where would it be?

59 R – It would be somewhere really calm and quiet for the children to be able to obviously  
 60 listen and engage. So not a busy environment, I suppose is what I'm trying to say. There'd  
 61 be easy access to resources, things like your pens and paper. Things like that.

62 I – Would it be inside? Outside? Bit of both?

63 R – Yeah a little bit of both. Yeah – I'd say a little bit of both. I do find I'm a big outdoor  
 64 kind of person. I do prefer the outdoors. I do think that children respond better outside  
 65 really. They learn a lot better being able to be free outside. So what have I said? I can't  
 66 even remember what I've said now!

67 I – Calm. Easy access to resources and free-flow.

68 R – Yeah free-flow. Just really engaging I suppose. Just having things that the children are  
 69 really interested in. I suppose that's quite hard to be able to say because it depends on the

70 children as to what they'd actually be interested in but just really engaging for that particular  
71 group of children.

72 I – I suppose that's kind of your flexibility isn't it? You need that to be a flexible  
73 environment to go with your children's interests and their needs.

74 R – Yeah because we don't like, we don't have anything that's hard and fast. Like, you  
75 know, you could come next week and there'd be so many different things in there because the  
76 children change from day to day, month to month, so it's not like ..... it's quite hard to kind  
77 of pinpoint the things you actually need really because you never know do you from one day  
78 to the next.

79 I – No. But that environment has to really kind of facilitate that doesn't it? You need to be in  
80 an environment that enables that flexibility and that spontaneity really. You know because  
81 not all environments are, you know, they wouldn't allow that to happen would they?

82 R – No. Definitely not, so like you'd need storage and stuff to make like...we've got, not so  
83 much storage but we've got some storage bits where we have things, like we've got down  
84 here where we've got lost of stuff and then we've got a cupboard under the sink and stuff  
85 where we keep quite a lot of things that are quite regularly wanted by the kids. You know  
86 you kind of get to know them after a while, what they kind of like, so we can swap and  
87 change things as much as possible.

88 I – That's that easy access as well I suppose isn't it. Giving children that easy access?

89 R – Yeah

90 I – What sort of resources are kind of your ideal?

91 R – Ummmmm

92 I – If I gave you a catalogue, a TTS catalogue or whatever and said...

93 R – Ooh I love TTS

94 I – It's so expensive!

95 R – I know it's too expensive!

96 I – But what's the section that you'd go to first? What's kind of, you know....

97 R – Ummmm. Just like the natural really. As I said I like the natural. I do like to outside  
98 and I do like the natural resources in general. So it would be tactile, it would be sensory for  
99 the children so they don't ever feel like you know.... We used to do phonics lessons here  
100 which makes me cringe now but you, no you don't want the children, they love free play  
101 don't they? We all know they learn through play. So we want them to continue to think that  
102 they are learning through play but whilst consciously getting all of this other information  
103 really.

104 I – And you want those natural resources to do that? To facilitate that?

105 R – Yeah!

106 I – Last question! What does a quality environment feel like to you? You know when you  
 107 walk around a house or go to look around a house if you're going to move, or go to look  
 108 round nurseries, you walk through the door and people say "you walk through the door and it  
 109 just feels right"

110 R – You just know!

111 I – How does that make you feel?

112 R – Safe really. Like a, I didn't look around nurseries as I put my kids here obviously but I  
 113 was looking around schools for my son just, I had a sense of safety, happiness really. Like  
 114 children being happy, content, again the staff as well. You could see when they were  
 115 engaged. When they are actually interested in what they are doing. It makes a huge  
 116 difference and you do, you just get quite a nice, fluffy, lovely, feeling really. Yes – that is  
 117 what you ideally want. Is that ok?

118 I – Lovely. That's absolutely fine. Yes – someone explained that to me the other day and  
 119 said it was like having a hot chocolate!

120 R – Ah that's lovely!

121 I – That fits with your fluffy lovely feeling!

122 R – Yes, the same thing! Ah how lovely!

123 I – Is there anything else? You know when we talk about quality environments, is there  
 124 anything else that kind of, jumps out at you?

125 R – Just the need, well the want, from, for striving for constant improvement really. And just  
 126 always wanting to do better. And yeah childcare moves so fast all the time. It's the research  
 127 and you know, like we all do lots of research but nobody here is like S. I know she's my  
 128 sister but she is amazing. She's always wanting, all the time and she pushes us so much to  
 129 make sure this is an amazing nursery and it really really is an amazing nursery. We're really  
 130 lucky to have it and it's just to be the best for the children really.

131 I – Yes. So that reflective practice?

132 R – Yes really reflective practice really and knowing that if you do something, you know we  
 133 all do stuff wrong and that's fine, we need to learn from it and we need to get better, really. I  
 134 think it shows. I think everybody really loves their job here. I know I really adore my job,  
 135 so! Which is quite nice!

136 I – Yes! Makes getting up in the morning a bit easier!

137 R – It does! Yeah! It's nice not to dread going to work!

138 I – Ah thank you so much. That was fantastic! Thank you.

139

1 **Phase One - Setting Four – Parent Interview. (PA7, S4)**

2 Role – Mum to 3 ½ year old daughter (P) who has been at setting for around 18 months. She

3 will go to school in September 2019 as September birthday. Has younger brother (who

4 attended interview).

5 I = interviewer

6 R = respondent

7

8 I – The first thing I’m going to ask you to do is, could you define for me, what you think,

9 what automatically pops into your head when I ask you what is an indoor classroom, what is

10 an outdoor classroom and what is a natural environment or a forest school?

11 R – So an indoor classroom to me is tables and chairs and things on the wall. Outdoors is

12 like sandpits and water and like...ohhhh.... *(son just put hand in blue powder paint and had*

13 *to be cleaned up!)* So yes, outdoor environments are wildlife and trees and plants...

14 I – Is that the natural environment or the outdoor classroom?

15 R – Outdoor classroom. Yeah. And then forest school to me is in a forest and logs and

16 campfires and lots of leaves and stuff.

17 I – Ok. Fantastic. Thank you. So what do you think about when you think about quality

18 environments like that? So to you, what’s a quality indoor environment? What’s a quality

19 outdoor environment? What’s a quality natural environment?

20 R – A quality indoor would be a variety of things because children all have interests in

21 different things. For instance P is into drawing at the moment so if they have drawing that,

22 for me, is, it’s what’s meeting their needs.

23 I – Following their interests?

24 R – Following their interests yeah. Same for outdoors but I know with most kids they like to

25 be outdoors so a lot of things to keep their interests. Animals I think is nice. They get to

26 learn how to be gentle and how to feed animals. That’s what I like about here. They’ve got

27 the guinea pigs and they, she always comes home and says “I fed the guinea pigs today” and

28 she loves things like that. Also being with a lot of other children. I mean that’s the whole

29 reason people send their kids to nursery as well is that they can interact with the other

30 children.

31 I – Yes.

32 R – So that’s outdoor. And like forest school wise.

33 I – What makes that quality?

34 R – Learning about your environment and ...yeah learning about the environment and about  
 35 the wildlife and about what she's picking up and what she's looking at and, yeah, that's just a  
 36 lot of things to keep them, to interest them. Yeah.

37 I – Yes. Fantastic. Thank you.

38 R – You wouldn't want a plain boring white room with nothing in it! Although their  
 39 imagination might start. It might be a good thing for their imagination but yeah if it is just  
 40 white walls it would be boring.

41 I – It's got to be colourful?

42 R – Yeah. Yes, it's got to be coloured. Stimulating. Noises as well though. Wind chimes  
 43 and all that sort of thing.

44 I – In all of those environments?

45 R – Yeah, I think so. Cos like they have mirrors and they have all the pretty things and the  
 46 noises, the rustles and the sensory kind of things.

47 I – Yeah. So what about then, as far as speech and language is concerned? What do you  
 48 think makes a quality environment for when we're looking at helping speech and language?

49 R – Do you mean the teachers? They obviously have a big part in that because if a child  
 50 pushes something and says "what is that" then the adult needs to say "this is what this is, and  
 51 this is how this works" and...

52 I – That supportive adult?

53 R – Yeah definitely. I think that's a big part of it. I mean as they get a bit older and they've  
 54 got words on the wall and they can sort of associate their words or, for instance, which I love  
 55 about here, is that they have their name against their photo and then when they get to a  
 56 certain age they take their photo away but they still recognise that that's their name.

57 I – Yeah.

58 R – Which I think is great because P recognises her name now. She recognises a p for P  
 59 (*name*) just from that, I think more than anything. Yeah. So yeah words and they do story  
 60 scribing here which is brilliant. P is always saying about the stories that she has done today.  
 61 She, they act them out. So acting them out makes her understand the language a bit more and  
 62 she's doing what they mean. That's really good.

63 I – So if you were going to design the perfect environment to help speech and language, what  
 64 three things, what would be your top three things that you'd need?

65 R – The teacher for one. Two, I think, things on the wall, I think things around them that  
 66 have words and they can associate with. I think the whole story scribing, writing stories  
 67 down of what they say, what the child is saying. Even if it's word for word and then they can  
 68 learn from that because they're obviously not always correct in what they're saying. Yeah



69 I – So stories?

70 R – Yeah stories. And they get to see it written down. Yeah and sort of talking back to them  
71 about it. And it's like their ideas so they come up with it.

72 I – That's valuing them isn't it?

73 R – Yeah and I think that, yeah, so they feel proud and then they learn new words and how  
74 to, you know, how to speak better.

75 I – Fantastic! Last question. What does a quality environment feel like to you? So you  
76 know when you go to look around a house, or when you were looking around nurseries, you  
77 walk through the door and people say "this just feels right". How does that make you feel?

78 R – Safe! Fun. I think for, in the nursery way, if I know it's going to, if P's going to fit in  
79 well. Like for me that was a big thing for P, so for instance here its free-flow and P wants to  
80 go outside then she could and I thought that's perfect because she can actually come in and  
81 out when she wants so it's, for her it's the perfect environment to be in because it's just what  
82 she would like, it's what she wants and on a day to day....

83 I – So would that be your perfect environment then, providing those things?

84 R – Yes when I looked around it definitely was. She's happy so that makes peace of mind I  
85 suppose because it makes, I know she'll be happy.

86 I – Fantastic! Is there anything else you think about when you think about a quality  
87 environment?

88 R – For me?? I don't know, I think....

89 I – Did you look around other nurseries before you came here?

90 R – No, but she had been to a previous nursery.

91 I – and would you say that that was a quality environment?

92 R – It was but it wasn't as as here because I liked the outdoorsy bit and they didn't have that  
93 really.

94 I – Right

95 R – Because it was like in a city. Yeah. I like the outdoorsy bit being very outdoorsy –  
96 they're very, fluid, I suppose and they just let the child kind of get up and go outside and do,  
97 not what they want, but, they are doing exactly what they, what the child wants to do, which  
98 has made me happy because I knew she would be happy here.

99 I – That whole free-flow thing?

100 R – Yes the free-flow really works for me because, and I like how they teach because they're  
101 ....yeah the free-flow definitely works over here and the forest school and everything cos she

102 loves being outside so for me that won over any other nursery around here, cos they don't all  
103 have that.

104 I – Does she talk to you more about what she does in those kind of environments than about  
105 what she does inside?

106 R – Yes she does actually. She's "we dressed up and we played today and we were helping".  
107 She likes helping so she'll be "and I was helping in this room" and "me are so and so were  
108 out, out playing and feeding the guinea pigs" but she doesn't really say if she's like read a  
109 book or done any painting or anything like that. I'll say "have you done any painting today"  
110 and she'll say "no" or it's something that she doesn't really remember, or she doesn't  
111 remember it because it's not something that she really wanted to do. I mean as an example of  
112 things she said, she made something and I said "oh you didn't tell me that" because she's all  
113 about being outside.

114 I – Ok. Fantastic. Thank you so much.

115

116

- 1 **Phase One - Setting Four – Parent Interview. (PA8, S4)**
- 2 Role – Mum to two boys at nursery. S is 2 years 2 months and Z is 4 ½ months. S has  
3 attended nursery since he was 4 months old.
- 4 I = interviewer
- 5 R = respondent
- 6
- 7 I – Right what I would like you to do first of all then is, can you define for me what you think  
8 is an indoor classroom, an outdoor classroom and a forest school, a natural environment?  
9 Imagine I know nothing about any of those environments.
- 10 R – Ok. So the indoor classroom is a room with doors. An outdoor classroom is anything  
11 outdoors. It doesn't have to be a defined area. A forest school is them getting muddy and  
12 mucky and playing with lots of sort of leaves and natural things. So that, but not like pine  
13 cones that have been collected and put in a basket but...
- 14 I – That are naturally there?
- 15 R – Yes.
- 16 I – And the resources in the indoor area and the outdoor classroom?
- 17 R – They would technically be the same. Well for me, in my definition. But I would assume  
18 that the outdoor stuff is much more mucky and muddy.
- 19 I – Yeah. So if you could tell me what you think makes these environments quality? So first  
20 indoors?
- 21 R – Books. Things to play with. Things to write. Areas for them to explore life, so kitchens,  
22 sitting areas, dolls,
- 23 I – You mean like real life experiences?
- 24 R – Yes.
- 25 I – Yeah. Brilliant.
- 26 R – And areas for them to sit quietly. So indoor. Outdoor lots of things for them to get  
27 muddy, to get into. Animals. I absolutely, I know it's natural because I'm a vet, but I love  
28 the fact that there are animals here. Places for them to learn about plants and trees and what's  
29 the last one?
- 30 I – Forest school.

31 R – Forest school. Again, to be honest quality is nothing about, I don't think necessarily it's  
 32 about the environment. I think that's about the teachers going into the environment and  
 33 knowing how to use that to teach them about it.

34 I – Yes. And do they need certain things in that environment in order to do that though?

35 R – Do you know what, I'm going to answer no. Because I think you could just take them, if  
 36 I'm honest, on a walk into the forests and say "right we've got these trees, we've got these  
 37 plants, we've got these sticks. What are we going to do with them?"

38 I – So you need those things to talk about?

39 R – Well, yes. You need outside.

40 I – Yes. Ok. Those things that are naturally occurring?

41 R – Yes

42 I – Fantastic. Thank you. So, in your opinion then, what would you say is a quality  
 43 environment when you're thinking specifically about speech and language?

44 R – I think the ability to listen. The ability to translate because I know some people's brains  
 45 don't easily understand small children. And understand. The ability to understand what they  
 46 mean and positive reinforcement. Actually talking to them, don't, not ignoring them or  
 47 hearing their views.

48 I – Yes. So again you're talking about the people rather than the environment there aren't  
 49 you?

50 R – Yes I think that for speech for me it's about the people talking to them.

51 I – Yes. OK. If you were going to design the perfect environment for speech and language,  
 52 to help children, what three things would you class as your top three that you'd need in that  
 53 environment?

54 R – Well the people!

55 I – I knew you were going to say that! (laughter)

56 R – Language development? I guess books. And, I think, writing things, pencils.

57 I – Mark making type things? Where would you be in your perfect environment?

58 R – For speech and language? Probably inside. Because there's less surrounding noise.

59 I – So you'd consider your acoustics for a perfect environment?

60 R – Yes (laughter). It's not just that. It's distractions. I've got boys so I don't know about  
 61 girls but my particular boys the minute you take them outside they're wanting to disappear  
 62 off.

63 I – Ah I see! Ok. This is the last question now. What does a quality environment feel like to  
64 you?

65 R – (interrupting) Happy!

66 I – I was just going to say that you know when you walk through a door and you say it just  
67 feels right....

68 R – Happy!

69 I – Happy!

70 R – Children shouting and screaming!

71 I – Yeah. That makes you feel happy?

72 R – Yeah it does. But talking. Them being talking. Them running around and chatting to  
73 each other.

74 I – Engaged?

75 R – Yeah.

76 I – Fantastic. Is there anything else that you think of when you think about quality  
77 environments?

78 R – For speech and therapy? Singing. I think there probably should be quite a lot of singing.  
79 And rhymes to try and help them. And doing group sitting and reading, working together.

80 I – Fantastic!

81 R – Is that it!?

82 I – Yes! Thank you so much. I am really conscious that you have to get there for 5 o'clock.  
83 Thank you.

84

85

86

1 **“Expert” One. (E1)**

2 Role – Forest school trainer for nursery chain (chain of 10 nurseries). Been in early years for  
3 17 years and a forest school trained for the last 9 years. Has been a forest school trainer and  
4 practitioner for last year. Female.

5

6 I = interviewer

7 R = respondent

8

9 I - So the first thing I'd like you to do - can you define for me what you think an indoor  
10 classroom is? We'll look at the indoor classrooms, outdoor classrooms and natural  
11 environments; forest school type thing. So if you could define the three. Indoor classroom  
12 first of all.

13 R - Tables ,chairs, bright lights, like fluorescent lights, black boards, whiteboards, quite  
14 sterile....

15 I – yes

16 R – Umm.. a lot of sitting down, being spoke at. High.....um....low ratio of adults to  
17 children and one adult to 30 children something like that...

18 I - yeah.

19 R - That's what immediately popped into my head. That's what I think of an indoor  
20 classroom.

21 I - And what about an outdoor classroom?

22 R - An outdoor classroom.....(interrupted by child).....

23 I – So outdoor classroom then?

24 R – Space! The outdoor classroom .....so a building that they just kind of build to put an  
25 outdoor classroom.

26 I – so like purpose-built?

27 R - yes purpose-built! Still probably has chairs, tables.... in my opinion an outdoor  
28 classroom is just for the resources from the inside to the outside and it probably has a set goal  
29 or purpose for the child to achieve. So it's like we're going to do a poem today but we're  
30 going to do in the outdoor classroom. I'm not knocking but that's what I say as kind of see as  
31 an outdoor... and what people see as an outdoor classroom.

32 I – Ok brilliant and the natural environment?

33 R – Ok so the natural environment is light, free choice, very child led. It's not about the  
34 outcome it's about the experience the children get. So it's like the stream here today ....it's  
35 been an experience for them. Also being in the outdoor environment it's feeling the weather  
36 rather than just talking about it, like a lot of children feel it's going to be sunny so they think  
37 when they're inside, they don't know it but when they're outside they get to feel that the sun  
38 is cold or hot. Yeah, and it's about more experiences. Just letting children kind of choose the  
39 line of where they want to go, to choose their line of learning. They have more time to speak  
40 and I think they get the opportunity to.... to talk more than when they're inside. When  
41 they're indoors it's more pressured because everyone's looking at them, but in the outdoor  
42 environment children seem less pressured and feel more at ease.

43 I - yeah that's fantastic. So with regards to playing and learning, can you tell me what you  
44 think is a quality environment for each of these three. So quality indoor, quality outdoor and  
45 natural environments.

46 R – Ok - so quality indoor..... I'll find that quite hard because I am an outdoor person. So  
47 quality indoor you will have to have a good teacher that kind of understands the children, and  
48 maybe have provisions to help their learning...

49 I – What do you mean when you say provisions?

50 R – Um kind of so they're taking the children's interests. So when they're doing there  
51 learning logs.....so it's like if they're doing maths rather than getting out the compare bears  
52 out, maybe giving them an opportunity to do it with maths....

53 I - so lots of resources?

54 R - yeah lots of resources. I think that's what they need in an indoor to keep children  
55 engaged so they don't get bored.

56 I – Yeah....and outdoor classroom?

57 R - Outdoor classroom. I think I need to make sure it is big enough for how many children  
58 they're taking out because obviously with an indoor classroom they all have a big enough  
59 space and with an outdoor classroom it's like they take the 32 children and put them into a  
60 smaller space and expect them all to be in there, so again I would say that an outdoor  
61 classroom you need to have like resources but different....

62 I – Different?

63 R - Yes different because obviously you're trying to do the outdoors and I think I need to  
64 have different.....

65 I - In what way?

66 R - I think maybe they're more natural. So for instance we make pencils at forest school so  
67 that if they have pencils that they made in the outdoor classroom....

68 I - lovely yeah. And then quality natural environment, forest school?

69 R – Yeah, so quality doesn't really have to matter on the size necessarily, but giving those  
70 children the freedom to explore, and you don't necessarily have to have man-made resources.  
71 It's all about the natural environment because the children then talk about their natural  
72 experiences. It's kind of natural to them where you're giving them an objects in an indoor  
73 whereas in the outdoor they're finding it themselves, it's something they're interested in and  
74 they want to talk about it, so it help them to talk about it..... so they might find treasure in the  
75 stream but in the indoor classroom or the outdoor classroom they might not have found that  
76 so they couldn't talk about it.

77 I - yeah I suppose the things they find in the indoor or outdoor classroom, you've got to have  
78 put them there haven't you?

79 R - yes and they not find that interesting. So what we might find interesting can be different  
80 to a child's perspective. So in the natural environment it could be a leaf that they find....

81 I – Fantastic, thank you. Please can you tell me how you think these areas benefit speech and  
82 language development, so again the three areas.

83 R – OK - indoors, I don't know the theory. I don't know that I can think of anything that  
84 could possibly benefit the child because I think children with problems with speech and  
85 language find it quite hard to talk in front of people. So I can't see any benefit. Sorry. I can't  
86 - really sorry.

87 I – No worries. What about the outdoor classroom?

88 R – Outdoor I think there is a little bit more opportunity because you've hopefully got the  
89 natural light and children should feel a bit easier in an outdoor classroom. If an outdoor  
90 classroom hasn't maybe got any walls but maybe just a roof, they're still getting fresh air  
91 coming through, so they might talk about the breeze coming through.... it's cold so that's the  
92 weather part of it....

93 I – And what about Forest School?

94 R – Ok .....(excited)

95 I – (laughing) you're not really biased here are you??

96 R - which is why.... I've worked in a nursery and then when I went on forest school training  
97 I did three free sessions and I just saw the benefit of..... I had lots of boys in my classroom  
98 and I just felt that ..... I just saw the benefit of those boys particularly being outside. They  
99 were the boys that were told "no". They were the boys that got told "don't run", "don't raise  
100 your voice" and actually why are we telling them not to raise their voice because it's too loud  
101 for us and when they're outdoors they can still like raise their voice and it doesn't seem so  
102 loud and you're giving them that opportunity, just to be independent.

103 I – So are you saying there are less boundaries?



104 R - Yes there's less boundaries, because we have rules and boundaries to keep them safe but  
105 if they want to move that rock from the stream to the grass that's fine. I think they're allowed  
106 to have that choice in doing more so the boundaries are less strict maybe, and they can see  
107 why there's a boundary. They can see if they were to go out that gate or something there is a  
108 road that you don't go past that road. If we were going to tell them don't go past those trees,  
109 it's very visual so they can see it and I can understand.

110 I - fantastic.

111 R - I think children, from my experience, feel a lot more at ease in the outdoor environment  
112 and necessarily all the children aren't focused on them. So when you're speaking to them it  
113 can feel a bit more of a one-to-one because you have a higher adult ratio outside and you  
114 want to give them the opportunity that child isn't necessarily having one teacher to 30  
115 children and then will have to speak out in front of everybody and if they have a speech  
116 impediment they don't want to. They may feel embarrassed whereas in an outdoor  
117 environment everyone is not near to them and they will have the confidence in speaking. I  
118 think they have more time, more freedom and just more time to express themselves. They  
119 have that opportunity to talk where I think maybe in a classroom and in an outdoor classroom  
120 it's very .....Maths is 9 til 10, English is 11 till 12. Whereas that child might have had a  
121 really bad night and might not be ready to function at nine in the morning. Whereas when  
122 we come out to Forest School we don't have select times. The whole time is the  
123 opportunity.....they're out the whole time and whatever we bring out with us for the first  
124 session we will always bring it for the second so it makes them more confident. They could  
125 do it again so the potion mixing we'll bring out that time they make a potion but then they  
126 might add things, the grass, the mud and stir in it round giving them different... sensations,  
127 feeling and then we'll bring it again so they can work with it again. They can say "oh I did  
128 this last time" but they've got that opportunity to revisit it. It's not stopped.

129 I - So are you saying that outside the lack of resources is almost helping

130 R - Yes definitely. Yes.

131 I - But it's kind of repetition?

132 R - Yes it's repetition and it's natural and they have to make their own play. They can make  
133 what they want to. I think in an outdoor, you don't need to bring all the packaging in. You  
134 don't need to set things up for the children to have when they are there. We are there to, to  
135 talk to them, to help them and guide them and then they guide us. We are there to help them  
136 make sure they're achieving really and it's never not achieving. There's always a way and  
137 then they work their way up. They never fail. It's all achievable steps.

138 *(The part of the interview above was undertaken outside in the forest school environment.*  
139 *The rain then came down extremely heavily and everyone had to relocate into the indoor*  
140 *environment – the interview carried on in the nursery office)*

141 I - So you've talked about the environment can benefit speech and language so what in your  
142 opinion is a quality environment for speech and language overall?

143 R - Overall as in being outdoors and at Forest School?

144 I - Anything. What do you think is needed in an environment to prompt speech and  
145 language?

146 R - I think time is the biggest. So a child has got time. Also I think visual and actually  
147 having hands on experiences rather than maybe just being spoken at. That is my main, my  
148 biggest passion. I think time and giving the child the space and the freedom to feel very  
149 comfortable and so they feel secure and they feel confident and their self-esteem is being  
150 built up, they are going to feel, you know, that they can feel happier in themselves and feel  
151 that they want to speak a bit more. If they're in a situation that's stopping speech hopefully  
152 they'll be happy and just trying to get the self-esteem up, then think okay, it's okay to speak.  
153 That's my big thing. The time. There's pressure on children so I like giving them stuff they  
154 absolutely love. Its experiences that children need. And if one thing that works for one child  
155 doesn't mean it's going to work for another child. So it's having different opportunities, a  
156 variety, rather than the same and then, kind of, I think being in an outdoor environment and  
157 what I've found from forest school, and what I'm so passionate about it, you get to know that  
158 child more. You feel like you kind of, you know when they're outside, you learn their  
159 interests. It's like when we do fire. We set the fire up and that is one of the main times the  
160 children speak the most. The conversations we hear around the fire is amazing.

161 I - why do you think that is?

162 R - I think personally the fire is quite a calming environment. It's quite quiet. They have  
163 boundaries. They're allowed to run around the fire circle but they're not allowed to go in the  
164 fire square. However they can sit around the outside and they can watch. So we do talk to  
165 them about the fire building up and it's just having that time for them to reflect. Almost a  
166 golden time to sit down and kind of like....they'll talk to friends or....we run a holiday club  
167 as well and some children come from all different parts. So we have children come from  
168 different families, different backgrounds. We have children who are fostered, we have  
169 children from all over. We have children with special educational needs but they all just  
170 work together and we don't have.... we don't split up children. So we have from 4 to the age  
171 of 13 and I think children then speak to each other and older children are brilliant with  
172 younger children. Younger children learn from the older children so it's giving them an  
173 opportunity to mix with other ages as well. And we do tell the older children to respect the  
174 younger ones and vice versa, we tell the younger ones to respect the older ones. We do have  
175 times where when the older ones are building a den, so maybe we'll come over here and build  
176 one. But they're respecting .....it's about respect and children respect each other, if they feel  
177 respected it goes a long way. We respect them and they respect us. It has to be both ways.

178 I - do you think that impacts on their speech and language?

179 R - definitely. I think it does because they feel more comfortable when speaking to another  
180 child rather than an adult. They might feel they're not being judged. Where some children  
181 unfortunately, they feel judged and I think it just kind of with speech and language, it's just  
182 that time of quietness and the opportunities to speak. It's not just, ok at 9:30 it's group time

183 and that's when you can speak. You can speak aallllll (all) the time. The only time that you  
184 have to listen is when you're doing, say a whistle, or we'll say like "guys, stop, come back to  
185 the fire circle" and they know that's the time to come back. We don't tell them they have to  
186 tidy up 24/7. They can do it when they want. They can go back to it. The fire circle does  
187 really help with speech and language. That's why we like doing a fire. Generally all of our  
188 sessions we do fire because of that kind of reflective, sitting down time. They choose to, we  
189 don't make them come down, they come and choose it.

190 I - and generally do they come?

191 R – They I love it. They come and they sit there and because I think maybe we're not  
192 listening as well so they sometimes speak a bit more freely. What we say to the people that  
193 come out with us, like the nursery nurses or teachers, these are true observations. You can't  
194 get more spontaneous .....they're not always spontaneous in the settings, whereas when  
195 they're outdoors there you can record exactly what they're saying. Where maybe inside it's  
196 noisy, whereas out there you can actually hear them, and actually what is true, what they're  
197 saying.

198 I – fantastic, thank you. So you're going to design the perfect environment to promote speech  
199 and language development. What are the three most important things for you in that  
200 environment?

201 R – okay. I would say areas for children to go to, to reflect. So like having a fire circle or  
202 hammocks, where children can sit and rest and have a quiet time.

203 I - quiet spaces?

204 R – yes, quiet spaces, that's one thing. Natural. As natural as possible, with natural light.  
205 That's a big thing, yeah a big thing. And opportunities.

206 I - can you expand on that for me?

207 R - as in opportunities for them to take their learning where they feel comfortable and then us  
208 as facilitators are there to support that. So we can find out their interests, find out they're  
209 really interested in bug hunting and provide everything we can to make sure they carry on  
210 with that and make sure..... it doesn't have to be bringing resources in. If it's something that,  
211 say they like birds, we might bring some binoculars in so that they can talk about those  
212 aspects but not just stop. It always being able to carry it on. Always carry it.... it doesn't just  
213 stop there. There's always time for it to carry on further with their learning.

214 I - fantastic. Last question! The last question I want to ask is slightly different, about what a  
215 quality environment feels like to you. So you know how you walk through the door and it  
216 just feels right. Like when you go and look around a house. It just feels right. What does  
217 quality feel like to you?

218 R - For me it's when you hear children laughing. That's a massive thing and they're engaged.

219 I – so does that feel happy to you?

220 R – yes! Just happy. The happy environment. Just seeing them all busy but not necessarily  
221 busy as in writing or reading or doing, but it could be busy in a hammock sitting talking to a  
222 friend. It could be just being busy as in tying a knot. Just kind of occupied, involved and just  
223 them feeling pleased with themselves, that sense of achievement. When you walk in, you can  
224 tell those children are happy with what they're doing and they've got a purpose.

225 I - and that makes you feel ....?

226 R – yeah that makes me feel...just seeing them happy, hearing them laugh, being engaged,  
227 being involved. Just seeing mixed age children working together. That's what quality feels  
228 like.

229 I - thank you. Thank you very much.

230

231

232 **Analysis of stance shown throughout this interview**

233 This participant showed a bias towards the outdoors, particularly forest schools, and struggled  
234 to think of anything positive about the indoor classroom. They were an advocate for the  
235 requirement of freedom for children and less boundaries so that children can self-regulate.  
236 They see the benefits of mixed-age groupings.

1    **"Expert" Two. (E2)**

2    Role – Level 3 forest school leader for nursery chain (chain of 10 nurseries). Been in early  
3    years for 12 years and forest school trained for the last 3 years. Male.

4

5    I = interviewer

6    R = respondent

7

8    I - So first of all what I am going to ask you to do is define these environments for me. So if  
9    I was an alien plonking myself down in to here, what would you tell me an indoor classroom  
10   was?

11

12   R - Well it's contained, so it's protected from the elements. So you've got a protected  
13   environment, a generally clean environment, a more sterile environment sometimes. Where  
14   especially for this setting, they'll specific areas for different areas of learning, with regards to  
15   if you're creative, for imaginative. And those areas set out to promote those different types  
16   of learning but yeah the main thing I suppose it's contained. You're protected from the  
17   elements.

18

19   I - Brilliant. And then an outdoor classroom? So I'm defining outdoor classroom separate  
20   from a natural environment. So an outdoor play environment?

21

22   R - An outdoor classroom is not completely enclosed, so not completely protected from the  
23   elements although quite often outdoor classrooms will have some kind of cover above. So  
24   maybe an awning or a gazebo or will have at least 1 to 2 open sides so at least the wind can  
25   get in and you see the rain, smell the rain, feel the wind and feel the temperature changes.

26

27   I - So exposure to the elements?

28

29   R - yes a little bit of exposure but they're not quite in the middle of it. Again generally  
30   because it's a classroom it will be set out with specific areas for different.... for encouraging  
31   different things for play or learning.

32

33   I - So similar to the inside?

34

35   R - Very similar to the inside, just bigger. And it's outdoor. It's not as protected from the  
36   elements and generally a bit less sterile and a bit less, less..... so what was the word I used  
37   earlier?

38

39   I - Clean, sterile...

40

41   R - Yes clean because it's a bit more open to the elements

42

43   I - And then a natural environment?

44

45 R – Well the natural environment is something that is..... something that is adapted to  
 46 provide a learning experience or play experience rather than something that is already, like  
 47 already exists for that purpose. So something that we've found in the natural environment.  
 48 So a woodland or beach, a meadow, a field, anything that is generally untouched by  
 49 development. For you know it may well have a.....a natural environment will be completely  
 50 no man-made structures. You know surrounded by trees, lots of mud, grass, leaves and again  
 51 something that you bring your resources to enhance that environment.  
 52

53 I – Okay, lovely. Thank you. So with regards to those three environments and with regards  
 54 to playing learning can you tell me what you think makes a quality indoor environment, a  
 55 quality outdoor environment and a quality forest school?  
 56

57 R - I think for me, for all three, there has to be, there needs to be an element of freedom and  
 58 element of kind of free choice from the children.  
 59

60 I – In all of them?  
 61

62 R – In all of them, definitely yeah, specifically for the indoor. I suppose it's a case of making  
 63 sure each area of development and each area of learning and play is available to those  
 64 children. So it's having that variety of activities, that variety of resources available so that  
 65 they can explore in their play and have different experiences depending on where they are  
 66 and using language or using their bodies or using their mathematical skills. Things like that  
 67 but also as much as you've got those different areas for them, I think to facilitate as much as  
 68 that environment, there has to be that opportunity to move those resources around, to mix  
 69 those resources, combine resources, to create other experiences. And similar for the outdoor  
 70 classroom and I suppose the natural environment as well, you know, the opportunity to mix  
 71 those resources whether it be making potions in the outside and mixing the mud and the grass  
 72 and the leaves up to make something from their imagination, and combining of different  
 73 media for example in the indoor you might have paint and the water and the Play-Doh. Not  
 74 to say that a free for all is the plan but the opportunity to have that choice to mix whether it's  
 75 having some premixed paint and then the opportunity if they wanted to try make their own  
 76 paint to do that. To go get some water, to bring it over, to mix it up with the Play-Doh, have  
 77 some ready-made Play-Doh and then have the ingredients available to make some more,  
 78 some different Play-Doh. So yeah, to give those children the opportunity to make their own  
 79 choices I think makes all of those environments quality.  
 80

81 I - What about the natural environment? Anything different to.....  
 82

83 R - I think the natural environment, again a quality natural environment is purely natural.  
 84 With regards to the natural, as little man-made structures in there as possible. With regards to  
 85 one of the situations we use for forest school, we try to rotate the sites we use, within a  
 86 certain space, so we're not having as much of an impact on the environment. So then when  
 87 you arrive you can't necessarily tell that we've been using it. So yesterday, all last week, so  
 88 hopefully it always feels natural rather than feeling used. And of course we take everything  
 89 away with us and bring everything back with us so it's not leaving any impact on the  
 90 environment.  
 91

92 I - Okay lovely, thank you. So how do you think these areas then can benefit speech and  
 93 language development? In regards to the three, or the whole if you prefer.  
 94

95 R – The indoor environment again, it's..... you'll quite often find lots of examples of  
 96 literature. So you've got children's books. In the home corner you'll quite often see  
 97 takeaway menus, recipe books, magazines, things like that, which I suppose introduces them  
 98 to the idea of letters and words. I think to provide the actual development of speech they  
 99 need to be hearing that rather than just seeing it. Especially with the age that we are looking  
 100 at, as much as giving them examples of texts is going to allow them to benefit it can be  
 101 presented in different ways. So a comic or a menu or a magazine..... I think to actually hear  
 102 speech in different ways that, that,..... we need to then promote speaking to each other and  
 103 then speaking to us as practitioners. To a certain extent that falls to the individuals who work  
 104 within that environment rather than the environment itself but I think imaginative play and  
 105 explorative play, having those opportunities already encourages the use of language because  
 106 they're already asking questions so it's giving them a new experience. It's gonna encourage  
 107 them to use their language because they're going to have questions about it. Regardless of  
 108 the age of the children. You could be looking at babies and if you give them a new  
 109 experience they are going to look at everything in a different way. They're going to be asking  
 110 you to show them how that works either by holding it up or pointing to it or if they're older  
 111 one they'll ask you how it works. Can you show me how to do this or how.....?  
 112

113 I - So do you think that it's important to promote awe and wonder as it were?  
 114

115 R - Oh without a doubt yes. Yeah providing an experience that they may not have had  
 116 before or maybe an experience that ....providing them with the resources that they may have  
 117 seen before but not had the opportunity to use themselves. Like actual kitchen utensils.  
 118 Things that they might of seen parents use at home but never had the opportunity to use  
 119 themselves. The simplest things a potato mashers, wooden spoons, pots and pans, that  
 120 parents may not allow them to play with at home and then when they're allowed to do that at  
 121 nursery or within the learning environment they will, they will ask questions about how to do  
 122 it or they will continue to imitate or use language that..... so yeah providing those resources  
 123 that they wouldn't have regular access to outside of the setting or classroom environment, to  
 124 almost encourage them to ask those questions and to explore themselves.  
 125

126 I - And I suppose that carries over into the outdoors...?  
 127

128 R - Yeah and I suppose the outdoor environment would be, offering the resources and the  
 129 opportunities to do things that they may not of done in indoor environment. So whether that  
 130 be building a den or swinging on a rope or climbing a tree.  
 131

132 I - So that's a natural environment?  
 133

134 R - Yeah that would be the natural environment, yeah. Giving them that freedom to explore  
 135 and to experiment. Giving them the opportunity to explore and just experiment for  
 136 themselves, although something like climbing on a ladder and jumping off of it, that may not  
 137 necessarily instantly encourage speech and language but when they suddenly find a game  
 138 plan and they're talking about how far they can go or how high went. If they can measure  
 139 that it's not mathematical, for height, length or they start talking about how difficult it was to  
 140 climb or difficult it was to balance so that kind of using words like slippery or hard, or high  
 141 or low and I think that almost starts to develop naturally, when they're in discussion about  
 142 what they're doing. So that from being able to explore they are discussing that exploration  
 143 and taking it further. Finding the high log, finding the lower log, finding the slippery logs or  
 144 a more difficult tree to climb.

145 I - So it's pushing those... the challenges, as well as experiences?  
146  
147 R - Yeah!  
148  
149 I - Fantastic. Okay. So what elements in any environment are essential to promote speech  
150 and language development?  
151  
152 R - That opportunity to get new experiences. That opportunity to try something they haven't  
153 done before and then that already straightaway encourages them to question. To question  
154 you about it or to question even themselves. They are quite happily talk to themselves. They  
155 talk it through to themselves. So when we did it like this, if I tried that, I'll do this in the  
156 same order, or I'll go and ask somebody else. So already they're talking to themselves or  
157 talking to another adult or talking to their peers about that. They talk themselves through it  
158 on then once that experience becomes familiar, they will then extend it. If you give them  
159 the resources and the opportunities to extend it. For an example, we very often go, regularly  
160 have the potion making equipment out so we may well extend that with regards to making an  
161 actual recipe from a children's story book. So Room on the Broom, that of course, in Room  
162 on the Broom she finds things that make a magic spell to fix the broom so we either read that  
163 book or talk about that book and talk about the process of finding different things and  
164 actually they kind of extend that themselves. Halloween is a very nice one, especially for  
165 potions. We become witches and wizards and make potions. Other ones, when we use more  
166 physical skills. We use peelers to peel sticks with. So they talk about how hard it is to pull  
167 that peeler to get the bark off that stick with a peeler, which hand they use it in, how tight  
168 they need to grip it, whether the stick itself is rough or smooth, green or brown, and that  
169 experience will then extend to finding another stick and discovering which stick is best and  
170 sharing that. Yeah it just.... almost.... it's difficult to explain how we do it but it's almost....  
171 it's just inherent with us to provide those resources. So it's sort of hard to put it into words  
172 how we then take that further. We almost.... I almost.... I think children naturally want to  
173 communicate, they want to ask how to do something or how something works, why  
174 something works, so to give them the opportunity to ask questions and then when we answer,  
175 that gives them more language. We've learnt, you know, what slippery means, what rough  
176 means and then they may be able to explain that to their friends when they ask questions.  
177  
178 I - So are you saying that adult involvement is key in this?  
179  
180 R - Yes I think the adult involvement is especially in the early stages of when they're  
181 introduced to Forest School, which is where I'm coming from. All my kind of angling is kind  
182 of coming from. The adult input is important not just for speech and language, but for their  
183 confidence and their self-esteem and just for the comfort level in that environment because  
184 for some of them it might be completely out of the ordinary.  
185  
186 I - But you said....you were saying that's in the early stages, but once they're established do  
187 you think....  
188  
189 R - I think once that confidence and that that familiarity is established in the environment, I  
190 think the communication and learning actually happens much more naturally without the  
191 adult necessarily actually having to direct them. Obviously we provide the resources. We  
192 don't just going into a forest, allowing them to explore, although that would be fun in itself  
193 but we would provide the resources to extend those activities that they may already done and  
194 are familiar but the initial familiarity with the environment and what we do in it. As soon as



195 they are familiar with that, they explore more freely, they communicate more freely and they  
 196 ask questions more readily because they're comfortable with us and they are comfortable with  
 197 where they are and especially with me as a male. So many children are more nervous and we  
 198 go to the forest...

199

200 I – Really?

201

202 R - Not always but some yes. So I find once they are comfortable, then they ask for my help.  
 203 If they're not comfortable with you then they'll ask someone they are comfortable with and as  
 204 we do this, as we do forest school every week they become quite familiar quite quickly. So  
 205 their communication flows much more freely and increases with the more comfortable they  
 206 are with it.

207

208 I – Fantastic, thank you. So you're going to design the perfect environment to promote  
 209 speech and language development. What are the three most important things you are going to  
 210 put in it?

211

212 R - Well it would be a natural environment. In my ideal it would be a natural environment,  
 213 so whether that be a forest or a meadow or anywhere where they had got some space and the  
 214 things I will provide. Resources. I think something to encourage imaginative play something  
 215 like potions or whether it's the idea that, again, it might not be a resource that I bring them. It  
 216 may be an idea that I give them. You know through an activity or through, through just  
 217 talking. The idea that a stick can be anything that you want a stick to be and what do you  
 218 think this stick could be? And it could be a sword or it could be a magic wand, it could be a  
 219 witches broom or it could be anything.

220

221 I - So that provocation then?

222

223 R - Yes definitely. So within the natural, providing physical resources because the  
 224 environment that I would choose would be a natural environment. In the ideal natural  
 225 environment those resources are already there and it would just be up to me to extend them  
 226 and to enhance them. So by using water in bowls and paintbrushes or sticks which can  
 227 enhance the mud and the grass and the leaves and creates the idea that we are wizards or  
 228 witches and making an actual potion, we're making a soup, and we're chopping it all, and  
 229 we're chefs or...anything like that. So that would be myself ...

230

231 I – Right, So that adult input? The natural space, the resources and the adult input?

232

233 R - Yeah definitely. Smashing.

234

235 I - Last question! This question is, what does the quality environment feel like to you? So if  
 236 you go to look for a new house, you know when you walk through the door it just feels right?  
 237 What does it feel like to you? How does it make you feel?

238

239 R - I suppose how I would want a natural, that environment to feel like if I was entering it,  
 240 would be calm, would be calm but busy so the children are engaged. So it's not like  
 241 screaming, shouting, running around, but more but that children are engaged in play of their  
 242 own design, of their own direction.

243

244 I - So how does that make you feel? That intrinsic stuff?

245  
246 R – If I were to talk into it I would automatically feel relaxed.  
247  
248 I – You’d feel calm yourself?  
249  
250 R - Yeah, I would feel calm. If I was the one who had facilitated that there would be pride,  
251 there would be contentment. That would be something if I had facilitated it. More kind of  
252 personal feelings involved. I’d achieved that or helped to achieve that but to walk into it as  
253 an outsider. if it was already in place, if it was already happening, it should feel calm, it  
254 should feel.... I don't wanna use the word productive but I'm struggling to find another word  
255 for productive because it shouldn't be about an end product but....  
256  
257 I – Purposeful?  
258  
259 R – Purposeful! Yes perfect. That's a much better word.  
260  
261 I – Okay. Thank you very, very much.  
262  
263  
264  
265 **Analysis of theoretical stance shown throughout this interview**  
266 This participant leant towards a scaffolded approach for children’s learning, talking about the  
267 emphasis of the adult involvement. They were more keen for this adult involvement in the  
268 indoor classroom and in the early stages of the natural environment, then believing that once  
269 children had learnt how to interact within the forest school the adults could then stand back.  
270 Then could come freedom and enhanced free-choice.  
271

1    **“Expert” Four. (E4)**

2    Role – Ofsted trained as an inspector and prior to that led and managed large early years  
3    setting, birth to five years.

4

5    I = interviewer

6    R = respondent

7

8    I – So the first question I’m going to ask then is how would you define for me the following  
9    environments? So if I knew nothing about any of these, how would you explain an indoor  
10   classroom, an outdoor classroom and a natural environment, so forest school type thing? So  
11   could you define those for me first of all?

12   R – That’s interesting. Well Ofsted doesn’t define, separate those environments at all in it’s  
13   criteria and it looks at environments as being all encompassing as in an enabling environment  
14   under the overarching principle as a definition. So when you’re going in to settings and  
15   assessing quality of teaching and learning, the physical environment of the classroom comes  
16   into that as well as the outdoor environment and if they have a provision for natural outdoor  
17   learning as well. So it all comes under one. Not one is considered to take priority over the  
18   other.

19   I – Ok.

20   R – The way that early years inspections run is that it’s very important as an early years  
21   inspector tat you are aware that you could be going in to a range of different settings from  
22   childminding all the way up to school settings which has various environments and children  
23   that are of different developmental ages. That includes community settings, you know, the  
24   pack away settings won’t necessarily have all that so. There is a reason why it’s not  
25   stipulated to be explicit like that because I think that there is a danger, from Ofsted’s point of  
26   view, where they want to make it very clear to their inspectors that no one is to have a  
27   preferred view of what quality environments should explicitly be.

28   I – Ok.

29   R – Because a quality environment for an early years setting depends on a number of factors  
30   which is about meeting the children’s needs, and that....

31   I – Ok so that leads me very nicely then into the next question then which is about what  
32   would you say constitutes these quality environments. So you’ve said it’s about children’s  
33   needs but there’s more to it than that though isn’t there?

34   R – Yes there is. I mean so what, in the Ofsted inspectors handbook, what Ofsted do is they  
35   outline what teaching looks like and there are links to the physical environment in that which

36 you must take account of. I think it's on page 35 of the handbook. It's a footnote but it  
37 forms a very big part of the observations that happen as an inspector.

38 I – So the teaching that's happening within the environment, rather than the environment  
39 itself?

40 R – Yes but what you're looking for is you're looking for the, the teaching and we use  
41 teaching in inverted commas

42 I – Yeah

43 R – The teaching encompasses all the, you know, exploring and the facilitating and all of  
44 that. You look at it from the characteristics of effective learning. So you're looking at how  
45 the environment supports children to be active learners in their play and exploration but the,  
46 because the inspection framework is based on the early years framework which, yet again, is,  
47 it's reference to environments is only really through the overarching principles where it says  
48 about environments are, links to, responding to children's individual needs and the  
49 relationships they build with partners and partnerships that's, that's an enabling environment.  
50 Enabling environment allows, responds to children's individual needs.

51 I – So that environment then, whatever that environment may be, wherever it may be, needs  
52 to not only have the people to do that but the resources and the equipment and the  
53 experiences to do that as well doesn't it?

54 R – Absolutely! So what then happens is within the framework, the inspection framework,  
55 the environment then comes under the judgements of quality of teaching and learning in  
56 which they reference the, being able to review resources to meet the needs of the children.  
57 And it's more to do with the activities and also in the leadership and management looking at  
58 how the physical environment is organised and reviewing that in terms of meeting the needs  
59 of the children's developmental needs.

60 I – So if you were going in to do an inspection today and you went into one of these physical  
61 environments, what kind of thing would you expect to see then that you would think  
62 constitutes this quality?

63 R – So it would be sort of under three prongs really. So it would be looking at the type of  
64 resources and activities that are matched to the children's developmental needs. How those  
65 needs are met and as a result you then have an idea about, you can observe carers interaction  
66 with the children during those and also the adult awareness and understanding about the  
67 importance of that. You would look at physical environments in terms of children being able  
68 to access a range of resources independently because we're looking at them being active  
69 learners so we're looking at how those resources can be utilised and you know freely  
70 accessed, open ended resources and play. And also you've got an area of the physical  
71 environment, is it safe? Is everything arranged in a way that children have enough space to  
72 move around to be able to learn and so, but it does say, there's another strand that's really  
73 quite important and it's about, you need to look at, is there a rich language environment?

74 I – Lovely! I’m going to come onto that now! Have you seen, have you already seen my  
75 questions? (laughter)

76 R – So, you, communication and language is a really important part of early years inspections  
77 and I’ll talk to you, I can tell you about things that you must include as an inspector in your  
78 report and some of those things do link to what we’ve just been talking about to do with  
79 quality environments, that must be, it’s a non-negotiable for an Ofsted report.

80 I – Tell me about the ones that specifically relate to speech and language then? Or  
81 communication? Please!

82 R – So, it’s under quality of teaching and learning. It says that, I’m just trying to find it now,  
83 because it says, the wording is that there, the learning environment needs to be rich and it’s  
84 something that you need to look for as an early years inspector. I’m just trying to find where  
85 the quote is.

86 I – What would you class then as a rich language environment?

87 R – Well this is interesting and is something that we had discussions about and discussed this  
88 on our training and it’s about, it goes back predominantly to the interaction with the adults  
89 and in terms of their communication with the children and opportunities that extend into story  
90 telling but with Ofsted a lot of the communication and language is preparation for the next  
91 stage of learning so it’s linked to the early years outcomes and looking at whether children’s  
92 language development is age appropriate and how staff are supporting that but also looking  
93 at, there is a physical element to that environment where you’re looking at stories, you’re  
94 looking at access to books, you’re looking at those type of resources that kind of enrich those  
95 opportunities.

96 I – Ok. So what about if you were going to inspect a forest school that was purely a forest  
97 school. Would you expect to see stories, books, those kind of things in those kind of  
98 environments as well?

99 R – No you wouldn’t and if it was, the inspection handbook is clearly only set up to look at  
100 provision where forest school is part of the learning. Not the total learning experience so  
101 when you would go out to forest school you would certainly, like it’s changed considerably  
102 because years ago you used to as a setting be very aware that when Ofsted came in they  
103 wanted to see what they would consider to be a balance of outdoor and indoor learning. So  
104 whatever your indoor learning was, then it had to be reflected outside.

105 I – Yes. All areas of learning covered and that kind of thing.

106 R – All areas of learning. That’s a myth! That’s not, there’s nothing that states that in the  
107 inspection handbook so that’s not true and therefore no inspector looks for that. What they  
108 do look for is they look for the natural outdoor learning environment and the outdoor learning  
109 environment to be enabling in the same way that you do inside and that doesn’t mean that  
110 every area of learning has to be present but there has to be a really enriching opportunity that

111 children need to be engaged in. Something that is outlining that teaching under the  
 112 characteristics of effective learning.

113 I – Ok. Thank you very much. So if you, personally, if you were going to design the perfect  
 114 environment to promote speech and language, what would, you know with all of your  
 115 knowledge, with your Ofsted hat and your practice hat, what would be the three most  
 116 important things for you when you're kind of considering how to set up that environment?

117 R – Oooh interesting! I think the, the resources need to be varied and diverse and yet again it  
 118 would very much depend on the children. If I had lots of EAL children then it would be very  
 119 different. I don't mean that it would be totally different but there would be things that I  
 120 would need a lot more so it's being able to have resources that match the needs of the  
 121 children. I think if we're looking at language, we're looking at written language as well as  
 122 oral language and I think for communication and language training staff. Staff need to be  
 123 aware of different ways to support children with communication and language so I think the  
 124 most important, for me, for the environment to be really rich I think the adults need to be of a  
 125 really high quality. I think you can be outdoors, you can be in a forest school environment,  
 126 you can be in somebody's living room and I went to see an outstanding, what was graded  
 127 outstanding, childminder and her interaction with the children and the children's vocabulary  
 128 was really really strong. The children were confident as well with their speech and they  
 129 could communicate their needs and this was just her lounge so you know, when you look at  
 130 the common factors of settings I've been into, the settings are very different but the quality of  
 131 the adult is the most important part.

132 I – Ok. So we've got quality adult, resources that meet the needs of the children that are  
 133 varied and diverse. What about your third? Where would you be in the ideal world to  
 134 promote speech and language?

135 R – Well in, from what I've seen during the inspections and also bringing my knowledge of  
 136 being in practice, any environment where there are lots of opportunities for children to play  
 137 and work with each other and where they're able to problem solve and think about things  
 138 together and I think often, in classroom situations, in very structured environments, in  
 139 schools, in our reception classes sometimes that is outdoors more often than not. And I think  
 140 forest schools in lots of provisions that I've been into over the last year, have very much been  
 141 used as an opportunity to explore open ended play and as opportunity to observe children  
 142 without that adult interaction at the same level that it's been within the classroom.

143 I – Fantastic! Ok. Thank you very much. Last question! This one's a bit different. What  
 144 does a quality environment feel like to you? So you know when you're looking round a  
 145 house, you walk through the door, when you walk into nurseries. Generally you walk  
 146 through the door and you know how it feels straight away. How does that make you feel if  
 147 you're in a quality environment?

148 R – Oh I think, I think it's, the way I can describe it, it's a hive of activity but it's calm. It's a  
 149 really warm environment where you feel, as an adult, supported and you can see that the

150 children feel very safe and supported and so there is lots of activity and children are very self-  
151 motivated and they're very confident, not confident but self-assured.

152 I – Fantastic! Thank you so much!

153

154

155 **Analysis of theoretical stance shown throughout this interview**

156 This participant was very focused on teaching and learning and advocated the need for the  
157 environment to reflect this. It was also about leadership and management of that setting,  
158 almost driven by the need to improve learning outcomes and enhance children's learning as a  
159 result of.

160

1 **“Expert” Five. (E5)**

2 Role – Speech and language therapist. Has been in the role for 35 years.

3

4 I = interviewer

5 R = respondent

6

7 I – What I’m going to ask you first of all is, could you define for me, what you think of when  
8 you are, kind of given these environments. So first of all, what pops into your head when I  
9 talk to you about indoor classrooms? How would you define that environment?

10 R – Well, I mean, the settings that stand out, I won’t mention any, but they ...the settings that  
11 I always think they’ve got it, in my mind, they’ve got it right, is the setting that, they’ve not,  
12 they’ve thought about it, but it’s not, and they’ve planned it well, but you walk in there and  
13 it’s not obvious that they’ve thought of it formally. You don’t think oh yeah that’s lovely cos  
14 they’ve set that area up for that. Some of it is obvious but they’ve catered for a number of  
15 children because as we all know there are children with different needs. Some children  
16 respond to the very formal sort of, you’ll see a lot of colours and numbers cos unfortunately  
17 that seems to be the area that a lot of planning...because they have to meet certain  
18 expectations but it’s the area, it’s the settings that have got good quality staff. I mean they’re  
19 the key people I think. Who are there in the areas and making sure that they get the best out  
20 of the activities that they set up. Not necessarily an activity but an area and then let children  
21 explore and then run with the child, what comes out of the child really as well.

22 I – Yes

23 R – So, yeah. They’re the settings that um....they’re the settings that have invested in speech  
24 and language to the extent their practitioners, I mean I don’t know if this is the stuff that you  
25 need....

26 I – Yeah!

27 R – But they send their practitioners on the training that we offer and education offer and so  
28 they are taking it seriously and realise the importance of communication, speech and  
29 language but to be fair I think a lot of settings are much more switched onto that anyway.  
30 The last sort of five years I’ve noticed. Since the government have been investing in...

31 I – The ECAT stuff?

32 R – Yeah. So, but yes. It’s not necessarily a setting that’s you know, as you know, not got  
33 lots of shiny gleaming equipment it’s all the stuff, like you say the outdoors play and they set  
34 up areas for children who are quieter and want to hide, you know, in those kind of quiet, I  
35 mean you know all this anyway because this is where our roles overlap I think



36 I – Yes.

37 R – Yes, because you're looking at the child and different children...children on the  
38 spectrum for example do need areas of, a place they can feel safe in. And those sort of  
39 children do need areas where they've got quite defined things for them to access, like the  
40 shapes and those sorts of things, but then there are other children who are very aware that  
41 they can't do, that they may not be able to do certain things so it's got to be something that's  
42 very much a free-flow and experimental for them. Lots of kinaesthetic....and through that I  
43 think sometimes there's a tendency for people to think oh to have a language activity it's got  
44 to be the obvious, and I would imagine you find that with your students who are still learning  
45 about that. They will set up sort of very obvious language based activities but actually you  
46 can get so much language from playing with pine cones and feathers and all of that sort of  
47 stuff so...

48 I – Beautiful, yes! Ok. Great. Thank you. And then, so you've covered off the indoor  
49 classroom and the outdoor classroom there. Have you got any knowledge or sort of  
50 experience around natural environments, sort of forest school type environments with regards  
51 to speech and language?

52 R – Yeah – well when I've done some observations of children they've taken me into settings  
53 where they have these areas and I, you know, I...and they've really become quite trendy now  
54 haven't they?

55 I – Yes!

56 R – Over the last ten years! But yeah, there's a setting who, they don't now, but they used to  
57 take their children once a week, I think it was part of a project, and they carried on and took  
58 them to S country park every week. This was a nursery so it was a big commitment for them  
59 but I heard lots of anecdotal stuff about language, coming from especially those children who  
60 are reluctant talkers. Children who are on the ASD spectrum. Lots of, their trust....they are  
61 much more willing to be communicative in that environment so in an ideal world...I think  
62 though more settings though are setting up aren't they, where children can take their learning  
63 outside.

64 I – Yes

65 R – And I think for some children, you know, as with anything they feel safer in a very  
66 defined ....quite a lot of settings have what they call the quiet area and they then have the  
67 busy, the busier area and I quite like that because you can, and then sometimes I've had  
68 children in the past in my care and they've tended to drift towards, or they go outside the  
69 whole time which is fine, but I think towards the end of nursery you, they need, sometimes  
70 children need encouragement to move around and that's when you'd introduce a timetable  
71 and I know that it's not easy to like, not really conducive to early years having it, but it's  
72 useful sometimes just to have something to move onto next

73 I – Some element of structure?

74 R – Yes. In a loose sort of way because sometimes children, and not for preparing them for  
 75 school because as we all know that you've got to get a balance haven't you? Because once  
 76 they're going to school though there is still free-flow and the children really, some of these  
 77 children struggle tremendously if there has not been any sort of "well come and do this for a  
 78 short time". I'm going off tangent now!

79 I – No, no!

80 R – But it has such an effect over whether they've got any communication in tense or if  
 81 they're just in their own little...and accessing, because some children are really good at  
 82 accessing things and moving on and taking advantage of everything but sometimes they need  
 83 a little bit of prompting and observations usually pick that up anyway.

84 I – Yes.

85 R – So it's all stuff that you know. I mean that's, you probably look at detailed stuff more  
 86 than us actually because often we see children in a clinic and we're not going out to settings  
 87 as much as we used to unfortunately because of all the changes in the way we're having to  
 88 work. We're having to be more creative and unfortunately that's one thing that has been  
 89 squeezed out really.

90 I – I mean if you did, when you used to go round to settings could you kind of walk through  
 91 the door and think "yeah, this is a good environment to be in as far as speech and language?"  
 92 Or "this is a bad environment". And what kind of factors were involved in that decision, if  
 93 you like?

94 R – I think if a member of staff, if they, if they had remembered I was coming, if they had  
 95 remembered then straight away they're valuing why I've come and then they've got a  
 96 member of staff that I can liaise with and then that member of the staff, or the setting SENCO  
 97 would be saying "well these are the sorts of things we've been doing" I think we're moving  
 98 away from the professional, the expert who comes in and tells us what to do, it's amazing, I  
 99 think for us as well it's empowering staff and sometimes saying "look you're really doing  
 100 really good things" You know perhaps build on that, do some more of that. Yes – it's staff.  
 101 Obvious, common sense thing like getting down to children's level, and I think building in  
 102 small group work if they can so that...because children that we are involved with, often their  
 103 attention and listening that's the biggest area of difficulty for our children. They're not,  
 104 they're like untuned radios so they're not really listening to the language that's being  
 105 modelled and that's another good thing that I'm aware of, and that's an adult not asking too  
 106 many questions. I'm sure you've come across that before.

107 I – Yes

108 R – So not too many direct questions, so it's them, the member of staff thinking about how  
 109 their style of communication are, so commenting, are they using different sorts of questions  
 110 other than open questions that are trying to extend them? The questions, asking "what's  
 111 happening?" rather than "what's that, what's that colour, what's this..."

112 I – Yes definitely! That barrage of questions!

113 R – Yes. And that's why it's good, to actually get staff to listen to each other because we all  
114 do it and you think crikey yeah !

115 I – Yes. So do you think that they need sort of, resources or kind of experiences in order to  
116 prompt that conversation?

117 R – Resources? What to encourage them to like, communication styles being different?  
118 Certainly some training, resources and really, I would imagine that that happens hopefully in  
119 training people...I know it does actually! You've got this a farm lotto game for example.  
120 What do you do with it other than play farm lotto with it? I suppose there are things that I do  
121 that I don't even think about, that I do, I adapt things. Because I used to work in HH and they  
122 had a language DSP, a designated service provision, so I saw the same children quite  
123 intensely so you get, you have to think of ways of working on nouns for example, and verbs,  
124 every day, well three days a week, and try to make it exciting and interesting. So then you  
125 just adapt things you've got so one bit of kit you've got, like a lotto game or something, you  
126 can do so many things with it. You know you can hide things around the room, you can do  
127 all of that so you've just got one resource but you can actually do loads of things with it  
128 around communication.

129 I – Yes. So it's having those open ended resources then really that you know...?

130 R – Yeah and fairly good, you know, I'm not one for high you know but they do have to be  
131 reasonable quality don't they, I suppose, at the end of the day. So that's why it's important  
132 that there's lots of sharing of ideas, knowledge of things that are good practice but also  
133 resources that are good because we all know, you can look in the catalogue can't you...

134 I – And spend an absolute fortune!

135 R – Exactly and actually it's not quite what you wanted and that's why when I was involved  
136 in the DSP we used to have networking meetings and we used to bring equipment with us  
137 around and have like a library of things that we shared, we shared stuff around and in effect  
138 we had a box full of stuff and then people talked around how they would use it, those  
139 resources, but...

140 I – OK. That's brilliant. Thank you. Right so if you were to design a perfect environment to  
141 promote speech and language, what would the three most important things be for you in that  
142 environment?

143 R – A quiet area.

144 I – Yeah!

145 R – So , but more than, so not just one little room off somewhere but an area that's a  
146 reasonable size and in there you had those sort of nice, calming, sort of, you could set up little  
147 dens and things, with, not just books, books is something good but just things that are going

148 to appeal and for children to come in and have a quiet time. And then the outdoor play  
149 area....

150 I – Yes

151 R – These are all pretty obvious I suppose. And then, what else? It would be  
152 lovely...because with the nursery I was in we went out to Sweden. I know a lot of the  
153 students from the university have been because I piggy backed on that and we just came  
154 back, and I used to work in a nursery and we were really full on, coming back from there and  
155 looking at areas where children can, and they did follow it through actually...real knives and  
156 forks and these were three year olds with glass, pouring their own drinks...and snack time  
157 became quite an area of focus so..yes, lots of turn taking can go on there, who's turn is it  
158 next? Names because a lot of children with language delay actually find that they don't  
159 remember children's names and they're not using necessarily very good eye contact and, as  
160 you know, snack is they just go and get it and zoom off but this is, you know, preparing their  
161 own snack, using cutlery, chopping, and you can get so much from that. I think that's what I  
162 would have. Somewhere they could do baking and cooking and that sort of thing.

163 I – Gorgeous! Thank you. Last question now, you'll be pleased to know! So I talked about  
164 walking into an environment and kind of knowing that it's quality, if you walked through a  
165 door of that environment, how does that make you feel? You know people say, they walk  
166 into a house if they're looking to move house, it just feels right. How does that make you  
167 feel?

168 R – It gives me a buzz I suppose and I have to say I would be much more likely to give more  
169 to that setting, and I don't think I should be saying this really, but I would go the extra mile  
170 because I know they're trying their best to help all of their children. And then if I see that  
171 parents are involved, again I've seen a setting, again I won't say where but this setting was in  
172 a deprived area going through quite difficult times, you know with Ofsted and all the rest of  
173 it, and I could see that they tried to engage parents because their cohort of parents were  
174 difficult to engage but yeah, things like noticeboards. I don't expect people to spend hours on  
175 noticeboards but there was little evidence to show parents what the children had done. I  
176 mean I think the greatest skill is people who can display children's work and it's all their  
177 work and they display in such a captivating, visual, bright way and you think "crikey, these  
178 kids have done this" but it's the way it's been put up.

179 I – Yes. I know what you mean

180 R – And then, trying to involve parents I think that's, as soon as you get into a setting, you  
181 can see if parents have been included. And then asking me questions. Does the  
182 practitioners....and then I'm more likely to give them, to send them stuff and keep in contact  
183 via email because it's a two way flow. It's not oh the therapist is coming in, they're going to,  
184 you know, wave a magic wand over this child. That's it really!

185 I – That's brilliant! Thank you!

186

187

188 Analysis of theoretical stance shown throughout this interview

189 This participant felt that staff are the key in a quality environment and the adults are the  
190 crucial part to encourage speech and language. There was also an awareness, and a  
191 requirement, for school readiness to be addressed, and it being the adults responsibility for  
192 this to happen.

193

## Appendix Eight

# Practitioners

### Nodes

Name	Sources
definition of outdoor classroom	0
open space	6
covered	0
fresh air	1
feeling elements	3
structured activities	2
promotes physical development	7
resources that are more natural than indoors	5
lack of furniture	0
similar to indoors	10
still has boundaries	0
opportunity for adventure	2
purposely designed	0
less sterile than indoors	0
child led	2
louder	2
definition of forest school	0
no boundaries	1
natural resources	13
no structured activities	2
connection with nature	10
use senses more	1
opportunity for exploration	2
risk	2
child led	2
physical activities	1
big space	1
exposure to dirt	1
definition of indoor classroom	0
dominant place for play and learning	2
Non physical	4
Divided into areas	10
Designed to aid development	5
Restricting	4
Lack of natural light or exposure to elements	3
Sound levels	3

## Nodes

Name	Sources
Structured	6
Safe and homely	1
adult led	2
toys and resources to aid learning	4
low adult to child ratio	1
clean and sterile	0
man made	0
stimulating	0
What is a quality indoor environment	0
Uncluttered	2
Resources	11
Atmosphere	3
People	1
Safe	1
cover learning outcomes	4
childrens interests	7
natural resources	1
planned	1
no funny smells	0
space	1
varied	2
child led	2
freedom	1
transportable resources	2
familiar experiences	1
grown ups	1
open ended resources	1
promotes teamwork	0
quiet spaces	0
mark making	0
What is a quality outdoor environment	0
Learning opportunities	5
Resources	6
Staff	3
Variety of experiences	7
opportunity for physical development	3

## Nodes

Name	Sources
structure	0
element of risk	1
safe and secure	1
space	0
freedom	1
child led	4
transportable resources	2
familiar experiences	1
opportunity for imagination	0
natural resources	0
opportunity to play with others	0
wildlife	0
messy play	0
open ended resources	2
quiet space	0
colourful	0
What is a quality natural environment	0
Variety of experiences	10
Wildlife	2
Adequate risk	5
Space	6
follow childs interests	4
Freedom	1
supportive adults	2
encourages development but not explicit	1
allows child to get messy	0
natural resources	4
familiar experiences	1
opportunity to play with others	0
prompts imagination	0
resources	1
open ended resources	2
Quality indoor environment for S & L	0
correct amount of resources	1
sound levels	1
adequate space	0



## Nodes

Name	Sources
books	1
child led activities	1
Modelling of language	2
resources to promote language	3
adult support	1
Quality outdoor environment for S & L	0
correct stimulation	1
resources	3
sound management	1
space	2
boundaries	0
child led activities	0
adult support	1
Quality natural environment for S & L	0
variety of resources	3
New experiences	1
Smaller groups	2
Space to talk and discuss	2
space	1
child led activities	0
adult support	1
risky play	1
Three most important elements for S & L	0
Space	4
Provocations	7
Sound management	1
Outdoor access	6
Natural resources	4
Books	4
Singing area	1
relevant games and activities	2
supportive adults	4
curriculum	1
Sensory things	3
Follow childrens interests	3
appropriate risk	2

## Nodes

Name	Sources
variety of resources	2
quiet area	4
mark making materials	3
free flow	3
time	1
physical activities	2
small groups	1
peer interactions	2
open ended resources	1
technology	1
real life experiences	0
How quality makes you feel	0
Warm and cosy	3
Stress free	0
Relaxed and calm	8
inspired	1
Feel like home	3
Interested	2
comfortable	1
happy	8
confident	1
safe	2
brilliant	0
feels like children	1
alive	1
feels like love	1
sad as separated from parent	0
good	0
How does indoor help S & L	0
learning based on interest	3
Quieter environment	2
Easier to observe children and help development	2
Books	4
mark making	1
interaction with others	4
relationships with peers	1

## Nodes

Name	Sources
play opportunities	2
singing activities	0
adult support	1
How does outdoors help S & L	0
Variety of things to talk about	5
lack of boundaries	2
spontaneity	3
support from others	3
more of a sensory experience	2
space to be more physical	1
space to have solo time	0
encourages imagination	0
new experiences	2
reflects interests	2
How does natural env help S & L	0
spaces to talk to each other	4
enthusiasm	2
it's real	1
freedom to make mistakes	0
spontaneity	2
variety of things to talk about	5
support from others	2
more of a sensory experience	2
less boundaries	2
encourages imagination	3
time for reflection	1
less resources	1
space for physical activity	1
more exploratory	1
new experiences	2
overall quality re S & L	0
listen to children	2
expand knowledge	4
foster imagination	1
role modelling	6
parental involvement	1

## Nodes

Name	Sources
<input type="radio"/> more knowledgeable other to support	7
<input type="radio"/> real life experiences	2
<input type="radio"/> appropriate use of space	1
<input type="radio"/> provocations	7
<input type="radio"/> feeling of safety	1
<input type="radio"/> books	2
<input type="radio"/> time	1
<input type="radio"/> child led experiences	4
<input type="radio"/> quiet spaces	1
<input type="radio"/> repetition	0
<input type="radio"/> noise management	0
<input type="radio"/> impact of light	0
<input type="radio"/> freedom	3
<input type="radio"/> natural resources	1
<input type="radio"/> homely	0
<input type="radio"/> smaller groups	0
<input type="radio"/> story scribing	1
<input type="radio"/> group activities	2
<input type="radio"/> technology	0
<input type="radio"/> mark making	1
<input type="radio"/> open ended resources	1
<input type="radio"/> element of structure	0
<input type="radio"/> Shouldn't be a differentiation between environments	2

# children

## Nodes

Name	Sources
definition of outdoor classroom	0
open space	0
covered	0
fresh air	0
feeling elements	0
structured activities	0
promotes physical development	0
resources that are more natural than indoors	0
lack of furniture	0
similar to indoors	0
still has boundaries	0
opportunity for adventure	0
purposely designed	0
less sterile than indoors	0
child led	0
louder	0
definition of forest school	0
no boundaries	0
natural resources	0
no structured activities	0
connection with nature	0
use senses more	0
opportunity for exploration	0
risk	0
child led	0
physical activities	0
big space	0
exposure to dirt	0
definition of indoor classroom	0
dominant place for play and learning	0
Non physical	0
Divided into areas	0
Designed to aid development	0
Restricting	0
Lack of natural light or exposure to elements	0
Sound levels	0

## Nodes

Name	Sources
Structured	0
Safe and homely	0
adult led	0
toys and resources to aid learning	0
low adult to child ratio	0
clean and sterile	0
man made	0
stimulating	0
What is a quality indoor environment	0
Uncluttered	0
Resources	4
Atmosphere	2
People	1
Safe	0
cover learning outcomes	0
childrens interests	2
natural resources	3
planned	0
no funny smells	0
space	0
varied	0
child led	0
freedom	0
transportable resources	1
familiar experiences	2
grown ups	2
open ended resources	0
promotes teamwork	0
quiet spaces	0
mark making	1
What is a quality outdoor environment	0
Learning opportunities	0
Resources	3
Staff	0
Variety of experiences	0
opportunity for physical development	3

## Nodes

Name	Sources
structure	0
element of risk	0
safe and secure	1
space	0
freedom	0
child led	0
transportable resources	0
familiar experiences	0
opportunity for imagination	2
natural resources	4
opportunity to play with others	1
wildlife	2
messy play	0
open ended resources	0
quiet space	0
colourful	1
What is a quality natural environment	0
Variety of experiences	2
Wildlife	3
Adequate risk	2
Space	1
follow child's interests	0
Freedom	0
supportive adults	2
encourages development but not explicit	0
allows child to get messy	1
natural resources	3
familiar experiences	3
opportunity to play with others	3
prompts imagination	3
resources	1
open ended resources	0
Quality indoor environment for S & L	0
correct amount of resources	0
sound levels	0
adequate space	0

## Nodes

Name	Sources
books	0
child led activities	0
Modelling of language	0
resources to promote language	0
adult support	0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Quality outdoor environment for S & L	0
correct stimulation	0
resources	0
sound management	0
space	0
boundaries	0
child led activities	0
adult support	0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Quality natural environment for S & L	0
variety of resources	0
New experiences	0
Smaller groups	0
Space to talk and discuss	0
space	0
child led activities	0
adult support	0
risky play	0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Three most important elements for S & L	0
Space	0
Provocations	0
Sound management	0
Outdoor access	0
Natural resources	0
Books	0
Singing area	0
relevant games and activities	0
supportive adults	0
curriculum	0
Sensory things	0
Follow childrens interests	0
appropriate risk	0



## Nodes

Name	Sources
<input type="radio"/> variety of resources	0
<input type="radio"/> quiet area	0
<input type="radio"/> mark making materials	0
<input type="radio"/> free flow	0
<input type="radio"/> time	0
<input type="radio"/> physical activities	0
<input type="radio"/> small groups	0
<input type="radio"/> peer interactions	0
<input type="radio"/> open ended resources	0
<input type="radio"/> technology	0
<input type="radio"/> real life experiences	0
<input type="radio"/> How quality makes you feel	0
<input type="radio"/> Warm and cosy	0
<input type="radio"/> Stress free	0
<input type="radio"/> Relaxed and calm	0
<input type="radio"/> inspired	0
<input type="radio"/> Feel like home	0
<input type="radio"/> Interested	1
<input type="radio"/> comfortable	0
<input type="radio"/> happy	2
<input type="radio"/> confident	0
<input type="radio"/> safe	0
<input type="radio"/> brilliant	0
<input type="radio"/> feels like children	0
<input type="radio"/> alive	0
<input type="radio"/> feels like love	0
<input type="radio"/> sad as separated from parent	1
<input type="radio"/> good	1
<input type="radio"/> How does indoor help S & L	0
<input type="radio"/> learning based on interest	0
<input type="radio"/> Quieter environment	0
<input type="radio"/> Easier to observe children and help development	0
<input type="radio"/> Books	0
<input type="radio"/> mark making	0
<input type="radio"/> interaction with others	0
<input type="radio"/> relationships with peers	0

## Nodes

Name	Sources
play opportunities	0
singing activities	0
adult support	0
How does outdoors help S & L	0
Variety of things to talk about	0
lack of boundaries	0
spontaneity	0
support from others	0
more of a sensory experience	0
space to be more physical	0
space to have solo time	0
encourages imagination	0
new experiences	0
reflects interests	0
How does natural env help S & L	0
spaces to talk to each other	0
enthusiasm	0
it's real	0
freedom to make mistakes	0
spontaneity	0
variety of things to talk about	0
support from others	0
more of a sensory experience	0
less boundaries	0
encourages imagination	0
time for reflection	0
less resources	0
space for physical activity	0
more exploratory	0
new experiences	0
overall quality re S & L	0
listen to children	0
expand knowledge	0
foster imagination	0
role modelling	0
parental involvement	0

## Nodes

Name	Sources
<input type="radio"/> more knowledgeable other to support	0
<input type="radio"/> real life experiences	0
<input type="radio"/> appropriate use of space	0
<input type="radio"/> provocations	0
<input type="radio"/> feeling of safety	0
<input type="radio"/> books	0
<input type="radio"/> time	0
<input type="radio"/> child led experiences	0
<input type="radio"/> quiet spaces	0
<input type="radio"/> repetition	0
<input type="radio"/> noise management	0
<input type="radio"/> impact of light	0
<input type="radio"/> freedom	0
<input type="radio"/> natural resources	0
<input type="radio"/> homely	0
<input type="radio"/> smaller groups	0
<input type="radio"/> story scribing	0
<input type="radio"/> group activities	0
<input type="radio"/> technology	0
<input type="radio"/> mark making	0
<input type="radio"/> open ended resources	0
<input type="radio"/> element of structure	0
<input type="radio"/> Shouldn't be a differentiation between environments	0

# Parents

## Nodes

Name	Sources
definition of outdoor classroom	0
open space	2
covered	1
fresh air	3
feeling elements	3
structured activities	1
promotes physical development	5
resources that are more natural than indoors	7
lack of furniture	1
similar to indoors	4
still has boundaries	1
opportunity for adventure	0
purposely designed	0
less sterile than indoors	3
child led	0
louder	0
definition of forest school	0
no boundaries	4
natural resources	11
no structured activities	2
connection with nature	6
use senses more	0
opportunity for exploration	2
risk	1
child led	0
physical activities	1
big space	0
exposure to dirt	1
definition of indoor classroom	0
dominant place for play and learning	2
Non physical	1
Divided into areas	2
Designed to aid development	3
Restricting	5
Lack of natural light or exposure to elements	1
Sound levels	0

## Nodes

Name	Sources
<input type="radio"/> Structured	3
<input type="radio"/> Safe and homely	4
<input type="radio"/> adult led	0
<input type="radio"/> toys and resources to aid learning	4
<input type="radio"/> low adult to child ratio	0
<input type="radio"/> clean and sterile	1
<input type="radio"/> man made	2
<input type="radio"/> stimulating	1
<input type="radio"/> What is a quality indoor environment	0
<input type="radio"/> Uncluttered	1
<input type="radio"/> Resources	6
<input type="radio"/> Atmosphere	5
<input type="radio"/> People	1
<input type="radio"/> Safe	2
<input type="radio"/> cover learning outcomes	1
<input type="radio"/> childrens interests	5
<input type="radio"/> natural resources	2
<input type="radio"/> planned	1
<input type="radio"/> no funny smells	1
<input type="radio"/> space	2
<input type="radio"/> varied	4
<input type="radio"/> child led	3
<input type="radio"/> freedom	0
<input type="radio"/> transportable resources	0
<input type="radio"/> familiar experiences	1
<input type="radio"/> grown ups	0
<input type="radio"/> open ended resources	1
<input type="radio"/> promotes teamwork	1
<input type="radio"/> quiet spaces	2
<input type="radio"/> mark making	0
<input type="radio"/> What is a quality outdoor environment	0
<input type="radio"/> Learning opportunities	2
<input type="radio"/> Resources	2
<input type="radio"/> Staff	1
<input type="radio"/> Variety of experiences	5
<input type="radio"/> opportunity for physical development	2

## Nodes

Name	Sources
<input type="radio"/> structure	2
<input type="radio"/> element of risk	1
<input type="radio"/> safe and secure	1
<input type="radio"/> space	2
<input type="radio"/> freedom	1
<input type="radio"/> child led	3
<input type="radio"/> transportable resources	0
<input type="radio"/> familiar experiences	0
<input type="radio"/> opportunity for imagination	2
<input type="radio"/> natural resources	2
<input type="radio"/> opportunity to play with others	1
<input type="radio"/> wildlife	3
<input type="radio"/> messy play	1
<input type="radio"/> open ended resources	0
<input type="radio"/> quiet space	1
<input type="radio"/> colourful	0
<input type="radio"/> What is a quality natural environment	0
<input type="radio"/> Variety of experiences	4
<input type="radio"/> Wildlife	2
<input type="radio"/> Adequate risk	6
<input type="radio"/> Space	1
<input type="radio"/> follow child's interests	2
<input type="radio"/> Freedom	4
<input type="radio"/> supportive adults	4
<input type="radio"/> encourages development but not explicit	0
<input type="radio"/> allows child to get messy	3
<input type="radio"/> natural resources	3
<input type="radio"/> familiar experiences	0
<input type="radio"/> opportunity to play with others	1
<input type="radio"/> prompts imagination	0
<input type="radio"/> resources	1
<input type="radio"/> open ended resources	0
<input type="radio"/> Quality indoor environment for S & L	0
<input type="radio"/> correct amount of resources	0
<input type="radio"/> sound levels	0
<input type="radio"/> adequate space	1

## Nodes

Name	Sources
books	1
child led activities	0
Modelling of language	1
resources to promote language	1
adult support	0
Quality outdoor environment for S & L	0
correct stimulation	0
resources	0
sound management	0
space	1
boundaries	1
child led activities	1
adult support	1
Quality natural environment for S & L	0
variety of resources	0
New experiences	2
Smaller groups	0
Space to talk and discuss	1
space	1
child led activities	1
adult support	1
risky play	0
Three most important elements for S & L	0
Space	0
Provocations	4
Sound management	1
Outdoor access	2
Natural resources	3
Books	6
Singing area	3
relevant games and activities	2
supportive adults	7
curriculum	1
Sensory things	2
Follow childrens interests	0
appropriate risk	1

## Nodes

Name	Sources
variety of resources	3
quiet area	3
mark making materials	4
free flow	4
time	1
physical activities	0
small groups	0
peer interactions	0
open ended resources	1
technology	1
real life experiences	0
How quality makes you feel	0
Warm and cosy	2
Stress free	1
Relaxed and calm	4
inspired	0
Feel like home	0
Interested	1
comfortable	6
happy	5
confident	0
safe	3
brilliant	1
feels like children	0
alive	0
feels like love	1
sad as separated from parent	0
good	0
How does indoor help S & L	0
learning based on interest	2
Quieter environment	0
Easier to observe children and help development	0
Books	1
mark making	0
interaction with others	2
relationships with peers	2



## Nodes

Name	Sources
play opportunities	2
singing activities	1
adult support	0
How does outdoors help S & L	0
Variety of things to talk about	5
lack of boundaries	1
spontaneity	1
support from others	0
more of a sensory experience	2
space to be more physical	0
space to have solo time	1
encourages imagination	1
new experiences	0
reflects interests	0
How does natural env help S & L	0
spaces to talk to each other	0
enthusiasm	2
it's real	2
freedom to make mistakes	1
spontaneity	1
variety of things to talk about	5
support from others	1
more of a sensory experience	2
less boundaries	0
encourages imagination	1
time for reflection	1
less resources	0
space for physical activity	0
more exploratory	1
new experiences	0
overall quality re S & L	0
listen to children	1
expand knowledge	2
foster imagination	1
role modelling	3
parental involvement	0

## Nodes

Name	Sources
<input type="radio"/> more knowledgeable other to support	8
<input type="radio"/> real life experiences	2
<input type="radio"/> appropriate use of space	0
<input type="radio"/> provocations	3
<input type="radio"/> feeling of safety	0
<input type="radio"/> books	3
<input type="radio"/> time	1
<input type="radio"/> child led experiences	1
<input type="radio"/> quiet spaces	2
<input type="radio"/> repetition	0
<input type="radio"/> noise management	1
<input type="radio"/> impact of light	0
<input type="radio"/> freedom	2
<input type="radio"/> natural resources	0
<input type="radio"/> homely	0
<input type="radio"/> smaller groups	1
<input type="radio"/> story scribing	0
<input type="radio"/> group activities	2
<input type="radio"/> technology	1
<input type="radio"/> mark making	0
<input type="radio"/> open ended resources	0
<input type="radio"/> element of structure	0
<input type="radio"/> Shouldn't be a differentiation between environments	0

Experts

## Nodes

Name	Sources
definition of outdoor classroom	0
open space	1
covered	1
fresh air	1
feeling elements	1
structured activities	2
promotes physical development	0
resources that are more natural than indoors	0
lack of furniture	0
similar to indoors	2
still has boundaries	0
opportunity for adventure	0
purposely designed	1
less sterile than indoors	1
child led	0
louder	0
definition of forest school	0
no boundaries	0
natural resources	1
no structured activities	1
connection with nature	1
use senses more	1
opportunity for exploration	0
risk	0
child led	0
physical activities	0
big space	0
exposure to dirt	0
definition of indoor classroom	0
dominant place for play and learning	0
Non physical	0
Divided into areas	1
Designed to aid development	2
Restricting	0
Lack of natural light or exposure to elements	2
Sound levels	0

## Nodes

Name	Sources
<input type="radio"/> Structured	2
<input type="radio"/> Safe and homely	0
<input type="radio"/> adult led	1
<input type="radio"/> toys and resources to aid learning	0
<input type="radio"/> low adult to child ratio	1
<input type="radio"/> clean and sterile	1
<input type="radio"/> man made	0
<input type="radio"/> stimulating	0
<input type="radio"/> What is a quality indoor environment	0
<input type="radio"/> Uncluttered	0
<input type="radio"/> Resources	3
<input type="radio"/> Atmosphere	0
<input type="radio"/> People	2
<input type="radio"/> Safe	1
<input type="radio"/> cover learning outcomes	2
<input type="radio"/> childrens interests	1
<input type="radio"/> natural resources	0
<input type="radio"/> planned	0
<input type="radio"/> no funny smells	0
<input type="radio"/> space	2
<input type="radio"/> varied	1
<input type="radio"/> child led	2
<input type="radio"/> freedom	0
<input type="radio"/> transportable resources	0
<input type="radio"/> familiar experiences	0
<input type="radio"/> grown ups	1
<input type="radio"/> open ended resources	1
<input type="radio"/> promotes teamwork	0
<input type="radio"/> quiet spaces	0
<input type="radio"/> mark making	0
<input type="radio"/> What is a quality outdoor environment	0
<input type="radio"/> Learning opportunities	1
<input type="radio"/> Resources	2
<input type="radio"/> Staff	1
<input type="radio"/> Variety of experiences	1
<input type="radio"/> opportunity for physical development	0

## Nodes

Name	Sources
<input type="radio"/> structure	0
<input type="radio"/> element of risk	0
<input type="radio"/> safe and secure	1
<input type="radio"/> space	1
<input type="radio"/> freedom	1
<input type="radio"/> child led	1
<input type="radio"/> transportable resources	0
<input type="radio"/> familiar experiences	0
<input type="radio"/> opportunity for imagination	0
<input type="radio"/> natural resources	0
<input type="radio"/> opportunity to play with others	1
<input type="radio"/> wildlife	0
<input type="radio"/> messy play	0
<input type="radio"/> open ended resources	1
<input type="radio"/> quiet space	0
<input type="radio"/> colourful	0
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> What is a quality natural environment	0
<input type="radio"/> Variety of experiences	0
<input type="radio"/> Wildlife	0
<input type="radio"/> Adequate risk	1
<input type="radio"/> Space	1
<input type="radio"/> follow child's interests	1
<input type="radio"/> Freedom	1
<input type="radio"/> supportive adults	1
<input type="radio"/> encourages development but not explicit	1
<input type="radio"/> allows child to get messy	0
<input type="radio"/> natural resources	1
<input type="radio"/> familiar experiences	0
<input type="radio"/> opportunity to play with others	0
<input type="radio"/> prompts imagination	0
<input type="radio"/> resources	1
<input type="radio"/> open ended resources	1
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> Quality indoor environment for S & L	0
<input type="radio"/> correct amount of resources	1
<input type="radio"/> sound levels	0
<input type="radio"/> adequate space	0

## Nodes

Name	Sources
books	2
child led activities	1
Modelling of language	1
resources to promote language	2
adult support	2
Quality outdoor environment for S & L	0
correct stimulation	0
resources	3
sound management	0
space	1
boundaries	0
child led activities	1
adult support	2
Quality natural environment for S & L	0
variety of resources	3
New experiences	2
Smaller groups	0
Space to talk and discuss	0
space	0
child led activities	1
adult support	2
risky play	1
Three most important elements for S & L	0
Space	1
Provocations	2
Sound management	0
Outdoor access	3
Natural resources	1
Books	0
Singing area	0
relevant games and activities	0
supportive adults	3
curriculum	0
Sensory things	0
Follow childrens interests	2
appropriate risk	0

## Nodes

Name	Sources
<input type="radio"/> variety of resources	2
<input type="radio"/> quiet area	2
<input type="radio"/> mark making materials	1
<input type="radio"/> free flow	0
<input type="radio"/> time	0
<input type="radio"/> physical activities	0
<input type="radio"/> small groups	0
<input type="radio"/> peer interactions	1
<input type="radio"/> open ended resources	0
<input type="radio"/> technology	0
<input type="radio"/> real life experiences	1
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> How quality makes you feel	0
<input type="radio"/> Warm and cosy	1
<input type="radio"/> Stress free	0
<input type="radio"/> Relaxed and calm	3
<input type="radio"/> inspired	0
<input type="radio"/> Feel like home	0
<input type="radio"/> Interested	1
<input type="radio"/> comfortable	0
<input type="radio"/> happy	1
<input type="radio"/> confident	0
<input type="radio"/> safe	1
<input type="radio"/> brilliant	0
<input type="radio"/> feels like children	0
<input type="radio"/> alive	0
<input type="radio"/> feels like love	0
<input type="radio"/> sad as separated from parent	0
<input type="radio"/> good	1
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="radio"/> How does indoor help S & L	0
<input type="radio"/> learning based on interest	0
<input type="radio"/> Quieter environment	0
<input type="radio"/> Easier to observe children and help development	0
<input type="radio"/> Books	0
<input type="radio"/> mark making	0
<input type="radio"/> interaction with others	0
<input type="radio"/> relationships with peers	0

## Nodes

Name	Sources
play opportunities	2
singing activities	1
adult support	0
How does outdoors help S & L	0
Variety of things to talk about	5
lack of boundaries	1
spontaneity	1
support from others	0
more of a sensory experience	2
space to be more physical	0
space to have solo time	1
encourages imagination	1
new experiences	0
reflects interests	0
How does natural env help S & L	0
spaces to talk to each other	0
enthusiasm	2
it's real	2
freedom to make mistakes	1
spontaneity	1
variety of things to talk about	5
support from others	1
more of a sensory experience	2
less boundaries	0
encourages imagination	1
time for reflection	1
less resources	0
space for physical activity	0
more exploratory	1
new experiences	0
overall quality re S & L	0
listen to children	1
expand knowledge	2
foster imagination	1
role modelling	3
parental involvement	0



## Nodes

Name	Sources
<input type="radio"/> more knowledgeable other to support	4
<input type="radio"/> real life experiences	1
<input type="radio"/> appropriate use of space	1
<input type="radio"/> provocations	4
<input type="radio"/> feeling of safety	2
<input type="radio"/> books	1
<input type="radio"/> time	2
<input type="radio"/> child led experiences	3
<input type="radio"/> quiet spaces	3
<input type="radio"/> repetition	1
<input type="radio"/> noise management	1
<input type="radio"/> impact of light	1
<input type="radio"/> freedom	2
<input type="radio"/> natural resources	2
<input type="radio"/> homely	1
<input type="radio"/> smaller groups	0
<input type="radio"/> story scribing	0
<input type="radio"/> group activities	0
<input type="radio"/> technology	0
<input type="radio"/> mark making	0
<input type="radio"/> open ended resources	1
<input type="radio"/> element of structure	1
<input type="radio"/> Shouldn't be a differentiation between environments	2

## Appendix Nine

Table 1:  
Combined responses given  
when asked what the three  
most important elements are  
for S & L

Node	Total number of occurrences (n=34)	Number of occurrences from parents (n=13)	Number of occurrences from practitioners (n=16)	Number of occurrences from experts (n=5)
Space	5	0	4	1
Provocations	13	4	7	2
Sound management	2	1	1	0
Outdoor access	11	2	6	3
Natural resources	8	3	4	1
Books	10	6	4	0
Singing area	4	3	1	0
Relevant games and activities	4	2	2	0
Supportive adults	14	7	4	3
Curriculum	2	1	1	0
Sensory things	5	2	3	0
Follows children's interests	5	0	3	2
Appropriate risk	3	1	2	0
Variety of resources	7	3	2	2
Quiet area	9	3	4	2
Mark making materials	8	4	3	1
Free flow	7	4	3	0
Time	2	1	1	0
Physical activities	2	0	2	0
Small groups	1	0	1	0
Peer interactions	3	0	2	1
Open ended resources	2	1	1	0
Technology	2	1	1	0
Real life experiences	1	0	0	1

Thematic analysis key:		Environment	Resources	Atmosphere
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**Table 2:**  
**Combined responses given when**  
**asked what a quality indoor**  
**environment is when considering S**  
**& L**

<b>Node</b>	<b>Total number of occurrence s (n=34)</b>	<b>Number of occurrence s from parents (n=13)</b>	<b>Number of occurrence s from practitione rs (n=16)</b>	<b>Number of occurrence s from experts (n=5)</b>	<b>Number of occurrence s from children (n=29)</b>
Uncluttered	3	1	2	0	0
Resources	24	6	11	3	4
Atmosphere	10	5	3	0	2
People	5	1	1	2	1
Safe	4	2	1	1	0
Cover learning outcomes	7	1	4	2	0
Children's interests	15	5	7	1	2
Natural resources	6	2	1	0	3
Planned	2	1	1	0	0
No funny smells	1	1	0	0	0
Space	5	2	1	2	0
Varied	7	4	2	1	0
Child led	7	3	2	2	0
Freedom	1	0	1	0	0
Transportabl e resources	3	0	2	0	1
Familiar experiences	4	1	1	0	2
Grown ups	4	0	1	1	2
Open ended resources	3	1	1	1	0
Promotes teamwork	1	1	0	0	0
Quiet spaces	2	2	0	0	0
Mark making	1	0	0	0	1

Thematic analysis key:		Environment	Resources	Atmosphere
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**Table 3:**  
**Combined responses given when asked what a quality outdoor environment is**  
**when considering S & L**

<b>Node</b>	<b>Total number of occurrences (n=34)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from parents (n=13)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from practitioners (n=16)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from experts (n=5)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from children (n=29)</b>
Learning opportunities	8	2	5	1	0
Resources	13	2	6	2	3
Staff	5	1	3	1	0
Variety of experiences	13	5	7	1	0
Opportunity for physical development	8	2	3	0	3
Structure	2	2	0	0	0
Element of risk	2	1	1	0	0
Safe and secure	4	1	1	1	1
Space	3	2	0	1	0
Freedom	3	1	1	1	0
Child led	8	3	4	1	0
Transportable resources	2	0	2	0	0
Familiar experiences	1	0	1	0	0
Opportunity for imagination	4	2	0	0	2
Natural resources	6	2	0	0	4
Opportunity to play with others	3	1	0	1	1
Wildlife	5	3	0	0	2
Messy play	1	1	0	0	0
Open ended resources	3	0	2	1	0
Quiet space	1	1	0	0	0
Colourful	1	0	0	0	1

Thematic analysis key:		Environment	Resources	Atmosphere
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Table 4:  
Combined responses given when  
asked what a quality natural  
environment is when considering S  
& L

<b>Node</b>	<b>Total number of occurrences (n=34)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from parents (n=13)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from practitioners (n=16)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from experts (n=5)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from children (n=29)</b>
Variety of experiences	16	4	10	0	2
Wildlife	7	2	2	0	3
Adequate risk	14	6	5	1	2
Space	9	1	6	1	1
Follow child's interests	7	2	4	1	0
Freedom	6	4	1	1	0
Supportive adults	9	4	2	1	2
Encourages development but not explicitly	2	0	1	1	0
Allows mess	4	3	0	0	1
Natural resources	11	3	4	1	3
Familiar experiences	4	0	1	0	3
Opportunity to play with others	4	1	0	0	3
Prompts imagination	3	0	0	0	3
Resources	4	1	1	1	1
Open ended resources	3	0	2	1	0

Thematic analysis key:		Environment	Resources	Atmosphere
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**Table 5:**  
**Combined responses given when**  
**asked how a quality environment**  
**makes you feel**

<b>Node</b>	<b>Total number of occurrence s (n=34)</b>	<b>Number of occurrence s from parents (n=13)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from practitioner s (n=16)</b>	<b>Number of occurrence s from experts (n=5)</b>	<b>Number of occurrence s from children (n=29)</b>
Warm and cosy	6	2	3	1	0
Stress free	1	1	0	0	0
Relaxed and calm	15	4	8	3	0
Inspired	1	0	1	0	0
Feel like home	3	0	3	0	0
Interested	5	1	2	1	1
Comfortable	7	6	1	0	0
Happy	16	5	8	1	2
Confident	1	0	1	0	0
Safe	6	3	2	1	0
Brilliant	1	1	0	0	0
Feels like children	1	0	1	0	0
Alive	1	0	1	0	0
Feels like love	2	1	1	0	0
Sad as separated from parent	1	0	0	0	1
Good	2	0	0	1	1

Thematic analysis key:		Environment	Resources	Atmosphere
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**Table 6:**  
**Combined responses given when**  
**asked what a quality environment is**  
**when considering S & L**

<b>Node</b>	<b>Total number of occurrences (n=34)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from parents (n=13)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from practitioners (n=16)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from experts (n=5)</b>
Listen to children	3	1	2	0
Expand knowledge	6	2	4	0
Foster imagination	2	1	1	0
Role modelling	11	3	6	2
Parental involvement	2	0	1	1
More knowledgeable other to support	19	8	7	4
Real life experiences	5	2	2	1
Appropriate use of space	2	0	1	1
Provocations	14	3	7	4
Feeling of safety	3	0	1	2
Books	6	3	2	1
Time	4	1	1	2
Child led	8	1	4	3
Quiet space	6	2	1	3
Repetition	1	0	0	1
Noise management	2	1	0	1
Impact of light	1	0	0	1
Freedom	7	2	3	2
Natural resources	3	0	1	2
Homely	1	0	0	1
Smaller groups	1	1	0	0
Story scribing	1	0	1	0
Group activities	4	2	2	0
Technology	1	1	0	0
Mark making	1	0	1	0
Open ended resources	2	0	1	1
Element of structure	1	0	0	1

Thematic analysis key:		Environment	Resources	Atmosphere
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Combined responses given  
when asked to define  
environments

Table 7: Definition of an indoor classroom

<b>Node</b>	<b>Total number of occurrences (n=34)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from parents (n=13)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from practitioners (n=16)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from experts (n=5)</b>
Non-physical	5	1	4	0
Divided into areas	13	2	10	1
Designed to aid development	10	3	5	2
Dominant place for play and learning	4	2	2	0
Restricting	9	5	4	0
Lack of natural light or exposure to elements	6	1	3	2
Sound levels	3	0	3	0
Structured	11	3	6	2
Safe and homely	5	4	1	0
Adult led	3	0	2	1
Toys and resources to aid learning	8	4	4	0
Low child to adult ratio	2	0	1	1
Clean and sterile	2	1	0	1
Man-made	2	2	0	0
Stimulating	1	1	0	0



Table 8: Definition of an outdoor classroom

<b>Node</b>	<b>Total number of occurrences (n=34)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from parents (n=13)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from practitioners (n=16)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from experts (n=5)</b>
Open space	9	2	6	1
Covered	2	1	0	1
Fresh air	5	3	1	1
Structured activities	5	1	2	2
Promotes physical development	12	5	7	0
Resources that are more natural than indoors	12	7	5	0
Lack of furniture	1	1	0	0
Similar to indoors	16	4	10	2
Feeling elements	7	3	3	2
Still has boundaries	1	1	0	0
Opportunity for adventure	2	0	2	0
Purposely designed	1	0	0	1
Less sterile than indoors	4	3	0	1
Child led	2	0	2	0
Louder	2	0	2	0

Table 9: Definition of a natural environment

<b>Node</b>	<b>Total number of occurrences (n=34)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from parents (n=13)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from practitioners (n=16)</b>	<b>Number of occurrences from experts (n=5)</b>
No boundaries	5	4	1	0
Natural resources	25	11	13	1
No structured activities	5	2	2	1
Connection with nature	17	6	10	1
Use senses more	2	0	1	1
Opportunity for exploration	4	2	2	0
Risk	3	1	2	0
Child led	2	0	2	0
Physical activities	2	1	1	0
Big space	1	0	1	0
Exposure to dirt	2	1	1	0

Yellow highlighted aspects were those which resulted in six or more similar responses and were therefore included within the TQAF definitions.

## Appendix Ten

### Informed consent form for interviews



My name is Tanya Richardson and I am undertaking a PhD with the University of Northampton. The working title of my research is “What constitutes a quality learning environment with regards to speech and language development for young children and how do factors in learning environment influence the characteristics of utterances made by young children?”

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the project. Before we start I would like to emphasize that:

- Your participation is entirely voluntary
- You are free to refuse to answer any question
- You are free to withdraw at any time before the end of May 2018 when the data will have been analysed

The interview will be kept strictly confidential and will only be available to myself and my supervisors. All data will be stored securely on the University server. When the research has been undertaken it will form part of a thesis which may in the future be published or presented in public forums. This research may also be used by other academics in future work. Any identifying features will be removed though so it is not possible to identify any participant, unless you would prefer to be identified.

Please sign this form to show that you are happy to proceed.

-----Signed

-----Printed

-----Date

You would like to see the final report on this project:

YES

NO (please circle one)

Thank you once again for taking the time to contribute to this research.

If you would like to contact me then you can email me on  
tanya.richardson@northampton.ac.uk

*Form adapted from: Robson, C. (1993) Real World Research. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing*

## Appendix Eleven

### Why might this be so?

This study found that the outdoor classroom was, in most settings, the highest quality environment and produced the highest quality of speech and language.

I believe this to be the case because the outdoor classroom generally has all of the elements that were identified as being indicative of quality, but these environments also have the advantage of having practitioners in close proximity to encourage and develop children.

Although forest school type environments perform well in quality terms, the children, when playing in these environments, are tending to play without adults. The space in the forest school allows them to find their own space, quite often away from adults, and their speech is therefore not scaffolded as much.

Indoor classrooms tended to produce the lowest quality speech, and influential factors in this appeared to be the noise levels and the space and freedom to allow play to develop in the way that suits individual children – the indoors was found to be more constraining.

### Thank you so much....

...for helping me undertake this research. Your help and support is greatly appreciated. If you would like any further details, then please get in touch by emailing:

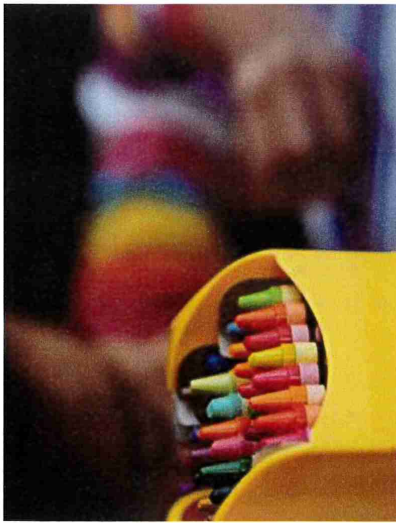
[tanya.richardson@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:tanya.richardson@northampton.ac.uk)



Does the quality of a  
play/learning environment  
impact on the quality of  
speech and language?

PhD study by Tanya Richardson





## The study

You may recall that you were asked to take part in a study last year (2018) that was aiming to find out if there was a connection between the quality of the environment in which children play/learn and the quality of their speech and language.

This study is now complete and I wanted to share with you the findings from my study. This leaflet sets out a summary of those findings.

I am extremely grateful to all who helped me complete this study; setting leaders, experts, practitioners, parents and, of course, the children. Thank you all for playing a part in this.

## What makes a quality environment?

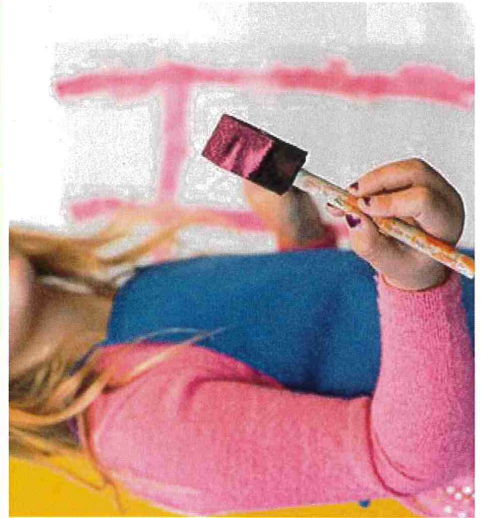
I asked you to discuss what you think makes a quality environment to assist speech and language and your responses came under three themes, as follows:

**Resources:** Provocations, Mark-making materials, Natural resources/wildlife, Promoting physical activity, Sensory items/messy play, Variety of resources, Familiar/real life experiences, Transportable resources/loose parts, Encouraging development, Opportunity for collaboration, Books

**Environment:** Quiet areas, Accessibility, Access between indoors/outdoors, Singing area, Space, Safe, Adequate risks, Uncluttered, Prompts imagination, Space to talk and discuss

**Atmosphere:** Acoustics, Freedom, Time, Supportive environment, Child led/following children's interests, How the environment feels

These aspects were used to compile a framework to assess the quality of different environments.



## “it’s a hive of activity but it’s calm”

(quote from a participant about what they perceive to be a quality environment)

## How did the environment relate to the speech quality?

Children’s speech was recorded whilst they played and their speech quality was analysed. It was found that there was a connection between the quality of the environment and the quality of children’s speech. The higher quality environment produced the higher quality speech.

I also found that there was not a vast difference between speech quality in the indoors, outdoors and natural environments, but in most settings the outdoor classroom was the environment that produced the highest quality of speech.



# Transferable Quality Assessment Framework (TQAF)

with a specific focus on environments to  
promote speech and language

© Tanya Richardson  
2018

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## **Introduction**

This Transferable Quality Assessment Framework (TQAF) is designed to be used in any Early Years learning environment, whether that be an indoor environment, outdoor environment or within a natural environment (forest school, beach school or similar). The focus of this framework is to assess the quality of the environment when assisting young children with speech and language development. A glossary is provided on the last page of this document and should be referred to throughout.

The TQAF is designed to be, as the name suggests, transferrable between environments and therefore the aim is that this be applied to any environment in which young children are playing and learning, within an English context. The “elements” that are included within this framework have derived from empirical research and therefore represent a wide range of stakeholders’ views and opinions. The TQAF could be applied to the environment as a whole, or alternatively, could be applied to different areas within the Early Years environment, such as the indoor classroom, outdoor classroom and natural environment. Should definitions of key environments be required, the definitions adopted for the TQAF are as follows:



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### **Environment Definitions**

*Indoor classroom:* A play and learning environment that is contained and has limited exposure to the natural elements. This environment is likely to be divided into areas of development, is structured and is designed to promote learning. Toys and resources will be within this environment to aid learning.

*Outdoor classroom:* This environment is generally an extension to the indoor classroom mentioned above and is therefore likely to have similar resources and experiences as the indoors, although these resources may be more natural (not man-made). It is more of an open space than the indoors though so has exposure to the elements and has more opportunity for physical activities

*Natural environment:* This could be a forest school, woodland, beach or similar environment. This is not a manmade environment and the resources and experiences here are generally those found to be naturally occurring within that environment. Those visiting this environment will be fully exposed to the natural environment and will experience a connection with nature through exposure to the elements, the surroundings, resources and *wildlife*.

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### **Instructions for use**

The framework is devised using the grading system as used by Ofsted (2018) and ratings of Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement and Inadequate can therefore be utilised should it be deemed to be useful. It may be that scoring is not required and the nature of the framework will, in this instance, highlight areas where there are aspects that need development.

A scoring system, if required, should allocate the following scores to each element as appropriate:

Outstanding	Score 4
Good	Score 3
Requires improvement	Score 2
Inadequate	Score 1
Not applicable	Score 0

It may be, when scoring a particular element, that the assessor feel that the score falls somewhere between two categories. In that instance highlight the document to indicate that and allocate a score in between the two. For example, if it is felt that there are aspects of outstanding and good in one particular element then a score of 3.5 could be awarded.

Common phrases are used throughout the TQAF and definitions of these phrases, from the perspective of this document, are as follows:

*A wide range:* A large variety. Opportunities exist to change experience often should the need arise. Children have a choice in what they access

*An adequate range:* Sufficient for the children to engage with. Children not likely to see new experiences often. There are elements of repetition. Children are engaged.

*A limited range:* Very little variety and little opportunity to change experience.

It is recommended that the TQAF be administered in conversation with others; not done independently. This conversation should be reflective and analytical and more than one

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viewpoint is therefore recommended to provide this depth and detail, as well as overcoming any potential bias.

Each element of assessment should be discussed, graded and the relevant box should be highlighted. If a specific element is not applicable to the environment then it should be marked as such. Scoring should then be carried out as follows:

- Add up the scores allocated to each element to give a total score for the area concerned (ie resources, environment or atmosphere). This will give a total score.
- Divide the total score between the number of elements that were considered to be applicable (disregard the elements that were felt to be non-applicable)
- This score will then relate to the rating as previously discussed

When all areas are completed a total score can be calculated to give an overall quality score for the environment, with regards to speech and language encouragement.

It is recommended that an action plan then be drawn up at the end of the process to plan areas for development within the environment. This can be used as evidence at inspections to show the setting's commitment to improvement.

## 1. Resources

	Element	Outstanding (score 4)	Good (score 3)	Requires Improvement (score 2)	Inadequate (score 1)	Not applicable (score 0)
1.1	<i>Provocations</i>	There are a <i>wide</i> range of items to promote questioning and conversation. These items tend to be unusual objects	Several items are present to promote questioning and conversation. These items may be unusual	One or two unusual objects may be present however are not rotated so have become familiar to children	No unusual resources are available to prompt conversation or discussion	This element is not applicable to this environment
1.2	<b>Mark making materials</b> (NB - not necessarily pens/paper etc – can be naturally occurring)	There is a <i>wide</i> range of mark making materials available to children as required	There is an <i>adequate</i> range of mark making materials available to children as required	There is a <i>limited</i> amount of mark making materials available to children. They may have to ask to access these	Very few resources available to children. Children may have to seek out the resources they require	This element is not applicable to this environment
1.3	<i>Natural resources/wildlife</i>	There is a <i>wide</i> range of <i>natural resources/wildlife</i> throughout the environment	There is an <i>adequate</i> range of <i>natural resources/wildlife</i> throughout the environment	There is a <i>limited</i> amount of <i>natural resources/wildlife</i> within the environment	There is no access to <i>natural resources/wildlife</i>	This element is not applicable to this environment
1.4	<i>Promoting physical activity</i>	There are a <i>wide</i> range of resources/activities to promote <i>physical activity</i>	There is an <i>adequate</i> range of resources/activities to promote <i>physical activity</i>	There is a <i>limited</i> range of resources/activities to promote <i>physical activity</i>	There are no resources/activities to promote <i>physical activity</i>	This element is not applicable to this environment

1.5	<i>Sensory items – allowing mess</i>	There are a <i>wide</i> range of <i>sensory</i> items to engage a variety of senses. Children are able to get messy if they wish	There is an <i>adequate</i> range of <i>sensory</i> items to engage senses. Children are able to get messy if they wish	There is a <i>limited</i> range of <i>sensory</i> items. Children are able to get messy if they wish	There are no <i>sensory</i> items available. Children are discouraged from getting messy	This element is not applicable to this environment
1.6	Variety of resources	There are a <i>wide</i> range of resources that are rotated as needed in line with children's engagement levels	There is an <i>adequate</i> range of resources that are rotated as needed in line with children's engagement levels	There is a <i>limited</i> range of resources with limited rotation. The same resources are regularly put out, with little variation	There is no variety in resources and experiences offered. Children appear disengaged with the resources available	This element is not applicable to this environment
1.7	Familiar experiences – <i>real life experiences</i>	The resources and experiences provided represent children's social and cultural backgrounds. A <i>wide</i> range of <i>real life</i> experiences are provided	Some resources and experiences provided represent children's social and cultural backgrounds. An <i>adequate</i> range of <i>real life</i> experiences are provided	A <i>limited</i> amount of resources and experiences provided represent children's social and cultural backgrounds. A <i>limited</i> range of <i>real life</i> experiences are provided	The resources and experiences provided do not tend to represent children's social and cultural backgrounds. No <i>real life</i> experiences are provided	This element is not applicable to this environment
1.8	<i>Transportable resources/loose parts</i>	There are a <i>wide</i> range of <i>transportable resources/loose parts</i> that children are able to move between areas in line with their direction of play	There is an <i>adequate</i> range of <i>transportable resources/loose parts</i> that children are able to move between areas in line with their direction of play	There is a <i>limited</i> range of <i>transportable resources/loose parts</i> that children are able to move between areas in line with their direction of play, however there may be rules on where transportation can occur	There are no <i>transportable resources/loose parts</i> . Children are not permitted to move resources between areas	This element is not applicable to this environment
1.9	Encourage development	All resources are purposefully provided in line with children's developmental needs	An <i>adequate</i> amount of the resources are purposefully provided in line with children's developmental needs	A <i>limited</i> amount of the resources are purposefully provided in line with children's developmental needs	None of the resources are purposefully provided in line with children's developmental needs	This element is not applicable to this environment

1.10	Opportunity for collaboration	A wide range of the resources and experiences are provided to encourage collaboration. Children regularly co-operate in their play	An adequate range of the resources and experiences are provided to encourage collaboration. Children occasionally co-operate in their play	A limited range of resources and experiences are provided to encourage collaboration. Children rarely co-operate in their play	No resources and experiences are provided to encourage collaboration. Children are not seen to co-operate in their play	This element is not applicable to this environment
1.11	Books	A wide range of appropriate and good quality books are available (although not necessarily all at the same time). They are rotated in line with children's engagement. They are not just restricted to a book corner but are freely available throughout the environment	An adequate range of appropriate and good quality books are available (although not necessarily all at the same time). They are rotated in line with children's engagement. They are not just restricted to a book corner but are freely available throughout the environment	A limited range of appropriate and good quality books are available. They may be just restricted to a book corner	Books are available but may not be appropriate and may be poor quality. There may be a large amount of books available at all times. They will be restricted to a book corner	This element is not applicable to this environment

Total score for Resources:

Average score for Resources:

Overall grading for Resources:

## 2. Environment

	Element	Outstanding (score 4)	Good (score 3)	Requires Improvement (score 2)	Inadequate (score 1)	Not applicable (score 0)
2.1	Quiet areas	There is ample space within the environment that is inviting and quiet to allow children space to think and talk	There is some space within the environment that is inviting and quiet to allow children space to think and talk	There is very little space within the environment that is inviting and quiet to allow children space to think and talk	There is no space within the environment that is inviting and quiet to allow children space to think and talk	This element is not applicable to this environment
2.2	<i>Free flow</i>	Children are able to move freely around the environment with easy access to resources and experiences as required	Children are able to move freely around most of the environment with limited access to resources and experiences as required	Children may be able to move around most of the environment, however there will be substantial restrictions. Children may have limited access to resources and experiences as required	Children are not able to move freely around the environment and have to ask an adult to access to resources and experiences as required	This element is not applicable to this environment
2.3	Access between indoors/outdoors	Children are able to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environment at any time	Children are able to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environment for most of the day	Children are able to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environment within certain timescales	Children are not able to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environment	This element is not applicable to this environment
2.4	Singing area	There is an area within the environment that allows children to sing and that provides the resources to make music when required	There is an area within the environment that allows children to sing and resources to make music may be available at designated times	There is an area within the environment that allows children to sing. Resources are not available.	There is an area within the environment that allows children to sing and make music when required	This element is not applicable to this environment



2.5	Space	There is a large amount of space which allows children to move freely and explore the area as required.	There is an adequate amount of space which allows children to move freely and explore the area as required.	There are restrictions on the amount of space and this can restrict children in their ability to move freely and explore the area as required.	There is insufficient space and children are not able to move freely and explore the area as required.	This element is not applicable to this environment
2.6	Safe	The environment is set up in a way that children are safe and secure. Risk assessments do not restrict activities/experiences as the environment is managed appropriately	The environment is set up in a way that children are safe and secure. Risk assessments can, at times, restrict activities/experiences	The environment is set up in a way that children are safe and secure. Risk assessments do restrict activities/experiences	The environment is set up in a way that children are not safe or secure	This element is not applicable to this environment
2.7	Adequate risks - boundaries	There are a <i>wide range</i> of resources/activities to encourage children to take adequate risks	There are an <i>adequate range</i> of resources/activities to encourage children to take adequate risks	There is a <i>limited range</i> of resources/activities to encourage children to take adequate risks	There are no resources/activities to encourage children to take risk. Children are actively discouraged from risk taking	This element is not applicable to this environment
2.8	Uncluttered – appropriate amounts	The correct amount of resources are always available to make the environment appear attractive and exciting. The environment is not cluttered or over stocked.	The amount of resources available often appear to meet children's needs. The environment is not cluttered or over stocked.	There are a large amount of resources available at any one time and this can detract from the experiences offered. The environment can appear cluttered or over stocked.	There are far too many resources within the environment which is overwhelming and distracting. The environment is cluttered/over stocked.	This element is not applicable to this environment
2.9	Prompts imagination	There are a <i>wide range</i> of resources/activities to promote children's imagination	There are an <i>adequate range</i> of resources/activities to promote children's imagination	There is a <i>limited range</i> of resources/activities to promote children's imagination	There are no resources/activities to promote children's imagination	This element is not applicable to this environment
2.10	Space to talk and discuss	There is ample space within the environment that encourages children to talk to others	There is some space within the environment that encourages children to talk to others	There is very little space within the environment that encourages children to talk to others	There is no space within the environment that encourages children to talk to others	This element is not applicable to this environment

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Total score for Environment:

Average score for Environment:

Overall grading for Environment:

### 3. Atmosphere

	Element	Outstanding (score 4)	Good (score 3)	Requires Improvement (score 2)	Inadequate (score 1)	Not applicable (score 0)
3.1	Acoustics	The noise levels are managed well, at all times. Children are able to be heard and to hear others  The environment always allows children the freedom to play and learn in a way that suits them. Boundaries exist but they are managed well and as such children are independent in their play	The noise levels are managed well most of the time. Children are generally able to be heard and can hear others  The environment often allows children the freedom to play and learn in a way that suits them. Boundaries exist but they are managed and as such children are mainly independent in their play	The noise levels are high at times and as such children may not always be heard or hear others  The environment sometimes allows children the freedom to play and learn in a way that suits them. Boundaries exist and they are managed in a way that can inhibit children's independent play	The noise levels are too high and children struggle to be heard or hear others  The environment does not allow children the freedom to play and learn in a way that suits them. Boundaries exist and restrict children's independent play	This element is not applicable to this environment
3.2	Freedom	The environment always allows children the freedom to play and learn in a way that suits them. Boundaries exist but they are managed well and as such children are independent in their play	The environment often allows children the freedom to play and learn in a way that suits them. Boundaries exist but they are managed and as such children are mainly independent in their play	The environment sometimes allows children the freedom to play and learn in a way that suits them. Boundaries exist and they are managed in a way that can inhibit children's independent play	The environment does not allow children the freedom to play and learn in a way that suits them. Boundaries exist and restrict children's independent play	This element is not applicable to this environment
3.3	Time	Children are always given the time to engage in play and learning. They can always revisit areas of interest when required. Routines of the setting do not interrupt their play unnecessarily	Children are often given the time to engage in play and learning. They often have opportunity to revisit areas of interest when required. Routines of the setting occasionally interrupt their play unnecessarily	Children are sometimes given the time to engage in play and learning. Occasionally, they can revisit areas of interest when required. Routines of the setting do tend to interrupt their play at times	Children are not given the time to engage in play and learning. They cannot revisit areas of interest when required. Routines of the setting interrupt their play unnecessarily	This element is not applicable to this environment

3.4	Supportive environment – space for role modelling (NB – role modelling can come from peers as well as adults)	The environment, and those in it, constantly provide the support for children to try new experiences and to extend their learning.	The environment, and those in it, often provide the support for children to try new experiences and to extend their learning.	The environment, and those in it, sometimes provide the support for children to try new experiences and to extend their learning.	The environment, and those in it, do not provide the support for children to try new experiences and to extend their learning.	This element is not applicable to this environment
3.5	Child led/follows children's interests	The environment, and those within it, is constantly responsive to children's interests and has the flexibility to adapt to meet the needs of the children	The environment, and those within it, is generally responsive to children's interests and generally has the flexibility to adapt to meet the needs of the children	The environment, and those within it, is sometimes responsive to children's interests and on occasions has the flexibility to adapt to meet the needs of the children	The environment, and those within it, are not responsive to children's interests and does not have the flexibility to adapt to meet the needs of the children	This element is not applicable to this environment
3.6	How does the environment feel?	When looking around, children are happy and appear relaxed and calm. They are engaged in their play. This gives a very good overall feeling	When looking around, children are generally happy and appear relaxed and calm. Most are engaged in their play. This gives a good overall feeling	When looking around, children are sometimes happy and some appear relaxed and calm. Some are engaged in their play. This gives a Requires Improvement overall feeling	When looking around, children are unhappy and do not appear relaxed and calm. They are not engaged in their play. This gives an unsatisfactory overall feeling	This element is not applicable to this environment

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Total score for Atmosphere:

Average score for Atmosphere:

Overall grading for Atmosphere:

Overall score for TQAF:

Overall average for TQAF:

Overall grading for TQAF:

Action plan

What needs to be done?	What element does this relate to?	How?	When?	Who?	Has it been done?

Add more rows as necessary – this should be a working document and adapted as needed

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## **Glossary:**

*A limited range:* Very little variety and little opportunity to change experience.

*A wide range:* A large variety. Opportunities exist to change experience often should the need arise. Children have a choice in what they access

*An adequate range:* Sufficient for the children to engage with. Children not likely to see new experiences often. There are elements of repetition. Children are engaged.

*Free flow:* The ability to move from one environment to another freely.

*Indoor classroom:* A play and learning environment that is contained and has limited exposure to the natural elements. This environment is likely to be divided into areas of development, is structured and is designed to promote learning. Toys and resources will be within this environment to aid learning.

*Loose parts:* Resources that have no set purpose. These may also referred to as open ended resources. Examples of loose parts could be cardboard boxes, reels, tubes, tyres etc.

*Natural environment:* This could be a forest school, woodland, beach or similar environment. This is not a manmade environment and the resources and experiences here are generally

those found to be naturally occurring within that environment. Those visiting this environment will be fully exposed to the natural environment and will experience a connection with nature through exposure to the elements, the surroundings, resources and wildlife.

*Natural resources:* Resources that are not man-made and are naturally available. Examples of these types of resource could be pine cones, leaves, wood, mud, water, sand etc

*Outdoor classroom:* This environment is generally an extension to the indoor classroom mentioned above and is therefore likely to have similar resources and experiences as the indoors, although these resources may be more natural (not man-made). It is more of an open space than the indoors though so has exposure to the elements and has more opportunity for physical activities

*Physical activity:* An activity or experience that will encourage children to use their gross motor skills and to exert themselves physically

*Provocations:* Items that provoke conversation, thought, curiosity and questioning. They are likely to be things that are 'different' and will therefore prompt interest.

*Real life experiences:* Experiences that represent situations that children will be used to within their lives. These experiences will represent social and cultural aspects of a child's life. Home corners and role play experiences are likely to fall within this category.



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*Sensory items:* Resources provided, or naturally occurring, that will engage the senses of smell, taste, touch etc. These items may result in children becoming messy but not necessarily so.

*Transportable resources:* Items that can be moved from one play space to another. There would be no restrictions on where children can engage with these resources to be fully transportable.

*Wildlife:* This can be insects, bugs, animals, pets – either naturally occurring or placed within the environment (such as guinea pigs or rabbits in a cage)

## **Appendix Thirteen**

### **Setting one, visit one of phase three data collection**

#### **Child 1**

Forest environment 18:58:54 – 19:00:09 (1 min 15 secs)

I'm going to find that dragon. Let's find him and wake up the dragon. Guess what we won't kill the dragon. Guess what. Guess what. We've got to hunt for him. This is my house. I found the dragon. Where's that yellow thing? Come on yellow thing, where are you?

Indoor classroom (on camera 5 as swapped due to camera 1 malfunction) 00:19:08 – 00:23:48 (4 mins and 40 secs)

I'm a lion. I'm a lion. Can I have the one with no eyes? I wanted to have that one. Kick. I'm a lion. I'm a lion. I don't like this. I don't like this. I want a t-rex. I want a dinosaur here. Get that off. Yes. Matata. Matata.

#### **Camera 2**

*Recording did not work*

#### **Camera 3**

*Sound did not capture*

#### **Child 2**

Forest environment 07:37:40 – 07:46:28 (8 mins 48 secs)

Jump, jump, slide down there. I am. Careful! I want to go over there. Me. We need some more water. No no I want to use the other one. I want to use a different tool.

Can I use a different one. Yes. Excuse me A. Excuse me. Look A

Indoor classroom

*Child had gone home early so no recording opportunity available.*

#### **Child 3**

Forest environment

*Child did not want camera on so no recording in this environment*

Indoor classroom 10:58:39 – 11:00:26 (1 min 47 secs)

*Child requested camera in afternoon so provided and recorded as follows:*

I think they're animals. Bad guy. Bad guy. Got you. I got you. Yeah. We got him. Ow! He got me. He got me. We got this drawer. We got this drawer. Hey, get back here. Bad guy. Got you. Bad guy. Go get him. Hey bad guy. Stop! Got....

#### **Child 4**

Forest environment 20:49:18 – 20:54:19 (5 mins and 1 sec)

It's moss. Moss, moss, moss stays in the ground and you can feel it. Yes. I'm going to roll down the slide. I'm going to roll down the slide. I'm going to roll down the slide. I'm going to roll down the slide. Can I come with you? I want....

Indoor classroom

*Child had gone home early so no recording opportunity available.*

#### **Child 5**

Forest environment 21:43:55 – 21:46:22 (2 mins 27 secs)

On your marks, get set, go. Ready, steady, ready, steady, go D. D you must go. You must go. Number two is touching again. I want to, oh no, a charge I'm too little.

Watch out of the way. D is pushing again. Catch him up. Back to the pole.

Indoor classroom – 00:35:26 – 00:36:48 (1 min and 22 secs)

This is, this is my horn. A horn. Everybody, everyone needs some money, needs some money, some money. You need some money. Everyone needs some money,

some money. I've got some pennies. Money. In here. It fell off. I'm smashing it. T told us. He's smashing it. Smash. Here you.....

#### **Child 6**

Forest environment 21:32:00 – 21:33:30 (1 min and 30 secs)

G watch out. And I'm going to be a big sister. My baby's nearly out. And guess what. We're going to have a massive bouncy castle. At nursery. It's my party. Not I's party. Yes cos she's only three. I'm going to big school. Guys. P I need to have...

Indoor classroom 00:20:40 - 00:22:26 (1 min 46 secs)

Where are we going? And then are we going back outside? Lok I've found a purse. I've got a purse and I'm coming to buy something. Do you want to help me? Yeah. They're like money. Stop it. You need to zip it up. N can you open this up?

#### **Child 7**

Forest environment

*No recording captured*

Indoor classroom 17:48:46 – 17:50:09 (1 min 23 secs)

It's alright baby. Can you look after my baby? Can you look after my baby cos I'm going work ok? But don't give anything to it. Look after it. I'm back to you. I'm back again. That's my, my baby one. No you're not going to be my friend anymore

#### **Child 8**

Forest environment 21:50:26 – 21:51:39 (1 min and 13 secs)

Can I have one of those? Yes now I have another choppy thing. I can chop. I can chop now M now look. Here I come mummy and dad. Here I come mummy and daddy. Can I have one of them scrapy things? Can I have a little one? Do....

Indoor classroom 00:50:14 – 00:53:06 (2 mins and 52 secs)

Watch, watch how far I can jump. I jumped without crashing. I jumped without crashing. H. Try and catch. No. I'll get off. And move it over. Look out. Here. Here. Here. S is saying no it doesn't want to go there. I want to have it there. I want....

#### **Child 9**

Forest environment 21:37:03 – 21:40:41 (3 mins and 38 secs)

You need this. Four, three, two, one. Look out. Yeah. One, two, count down, one, two, three, go, one, one, two, one, two, three, on the next one, you can go, good running, three, four, five, go. Good game. J. D. Go down. I nearly fall. Oh look. You can ....

Indoor classroom 00:33:34 – 00:35:55 (2 mins and 21 sec)

Jump. Jump. Me jumped from here. Me jumped from here. All....We are jumping we are. Like this. Jump. Watch out. Hello. Ok. What can I have? A it's fourteen pound. It's fourteen pound. This is money. Everyone this is money. You need some money. It money L. Yes. This is....

#### **Child 10**

Forest environment 08:10:39 – 08:12:34 (1 min and 55 secs)

A I'm going to try and come up this hill. What's that bag? What's that bag doing there? N is that your bag? N is this your bag? A watch me run up this hill. Watch this. Got you! Here I come. Watch this. Watch. Watch this. I'm going too.....

Indoor classroom

*Sound did not capture*

### **Setting one, visit two of phase three data collection**

#### **Child 1**

Wildlife garden environment 19:03:21 – 19:04:21 (1 min 00 secs)

What green tunnel? Green tunnel? Here? It's sharp. The green tunnel is just over the top. I'm just a little bit sad. I wanted the sharp one. I want the sharp one.

There's another box of tools. I don't want, can I have a big one? I've got a sharp....

Outdoor classroom 19:51:21 – 19:55:05 (3 mins and 44 secs)

Can I have another blue one? What's that one? I want that one. I want the blue one.

Everybody has to stay. I can do that. Or you could do this. Or you could do this.

I've got two. There you go. I don't want that. What did you say?

#### **Child 11**

Wildlife garden environment 18:37:45 – 18:41:04 (3 mins and 19 secs)

Stop. Come back. Can I climb up that one? Over there. H. A is calling you. But A might fall on that tree. I'm not going to stand on it though. Mummy's gone to work. No Mummy said back to work (*inaudible*) You stood there. You stood there. Look at me.

Outdoor classroom 19:51:21 – 19:55:05 (3 mins and 44 secs)

*No recording captured*

#### **Camera 3**

*Sound did not capture*

#### **Child 2**

Wildlife garden environment 07:48:55 – 07:49:54 (59 secs)

Guys. Remember. I, I, I (name), I (name) yes or no, yes, ok bye I (name), what. I need to go, I need to go somewhere. I need to go to, I need to go to A. Bye bye I (name), bye bye I (name), bye I (name). Are you coming with me, ok. We at .....

Outdoor classroom 08:38:21 – 08:41:30 (3 mins and 9 secs)

Come on dog. Let's go back home to eat your dinner. Yea it's cos you're being a dog. Dog. Sorry D. Sorry. D. I want, the baby's got some. Actually I'm a puppy. There's a puppy in our house. Yes. I don't want to. I need something. I need something.

#### **Child 4**

Wildlife garden environment 20:17:18 – 20:19:41 (2 mins and 23 secs)

I've opened a big bit of rock. No. Yes it's rock. I can point out any piece of rock I can. I opened a big piece of rock. You're right it's not, it's just a piece of, I'm trying to get a big bit of earth. I found a stone

Outdoor classroom 21:26:41 – 21:37:56 (11 mins and 15 secs)

Not yet. I think we need to tilt it. Mine's all run out. I have none left. I can't stop it.

I need to get more. It's cocoa. Yes. No. This is not, this is. Now let's just go.

That's the bin. That is the bin. You missed. I didn't.....

#### **Camera 6**

*Sound did not capture*

#### **Child 6**

Wildlife garden environment 21:14:31 – 21:15:31 (1 min)

A I want to see your prize. A I want to see your prize. It can't go under. See what we got out. A bubblegum girl. Bubblegum power from a bubblegum girl. This is from the bubblegum girl. Right she's in this forest and we have to, so I'll show....

Outdoor classroom 22:02:14 - 22:02:54 (40 secs)

Who wants to join my colourful? I have to draw all of us. I was going to draw all of us. Do you want to draw B? A I don't want to do the colouring. She just wants to wear a dress, with wet hair. She just wants to have....

**Child 7**

Wildlife garden environment 13:44:57 – 13:47:00 (2 mins and 3 secs)

Why did the pirates do this? Why did the pirates done this? Yes. A secret pathway? A look at me. Pirates! Pirates! Pirates! Take that! Is that bigger passageway? You come out of that? Need to get out of my house. Watch this! No you can't go in there cos....

Outdoor classroom

*No recording captured*

**Camera 10**

*Sound did not capture*

**Child 9**

Wildlife garden environment 21:05:19 – 21:12:06 (6 mins and 47 secs)

Aye aye captain. Pirates coming. Pirates. That way. Get him. Aye aye captain. O, O, H where A? There. S? Is that our milk? Is that our milk? Yes it is. Yes. I can run. Yes. Me will hold them, I am. And me. I want to hold them. Yes.

Outdoor classroom 22:27:48– 22:38:03 (8 mins and 15 sec)

No. They're at my house. I need these. No can't. No. No. No can't. You can have that one. I'm in bed. No P, No they're mine. No they're mine. Can you give me (inaudible) please. No. Yes. Doggy. Help me. Yes. A? A? Can you take this off .....(now? - camera removed)

**Camera dirty blk**

*Sound did not capture*

**Setting one, visit three of phase three data collection**

**Child 3**

Wildlife garden environment 18:54:59 – 18:56:57 (1 min 58 secs)

It dangle on there. Right behind you, left, right, left, O, O, stop you. O where is M. Let's go. I'll go that way and you go that way. No. We're making. Oh no that's not, you have to go that way. Walk the plank. Let's go. Yes. O, I (don't have that anymore)

Outdoor classroom 18:50:32 – 18:52:18 (1 min and 46 secs)

She just said no. (singing to self) Baby finger where are you? Here I am, here I am, how do you do? Middle finger, where, where. I need another paper. The door won't open. My camera has gone wrong. Yes. It's meant to flash. It's meant to flash. Yes. OK. I'll ask her ....

**Camera 3**

*Sound did not capture*

**Child 2**

Wildlife garden environment 07:22:31 – 07:24:56 (2 mins and 25 secs)

What? P, P. Look I'm on your seat! I want to take my camera off. 15 words (took camera off as wanted to play in the hose pipe play so recording stopped – did not want it back on)

Outdoor classroom 06:56:21 – 07:01:27 (5 mins and 6 secs)

No, there's some sand over, F that's K's, that's K's. That's K's. I need some soil. There's no more now. That's pie ok. That's mine. What's that? What's that sound?

What's that sound? This is it. Who's ready for this? It's really, really good. This, this, this is not on ....

#### **Child 4**

Wildlife garden environment 20:17:13 – 20:18:23 (1 mins and 10 secs)

Don't worry I'm coming. I'm not in jail too. I'll get you out of jail. You're stuck in the jail. You're, yes, the alien. Yes let's go, alien, alien, yes the alien. I found an alien. It's an alien. It's a piñata. Pinata. It's a piñata. Do it at the ....

Outdoor classroom 21:17:50 – 21:19:43 (1 min and 53 secs)

I fly upside down. I fly sideways. Yes. I, I eat slime, yummy for aliens, yes but not very good for my lunch. He eats ice lollies. That's what he eats. And he sits on the toilet. He's on the toilet. We'll just keep swapping. Look, look what I can ....

Indoor classroom 21:57:44 - 21:58:29 (45 secs)

If, if somebody, if somebody, if somebody, if somebody hits me then I hit them back. My mummy says that. Well my mummy, my mummy says if, she says I should hit them back. If you want to. There's something I've got to mend. Can you hold this right up?

#### **Camera 6**

*Sound did not capture*

#### **Child 6**

Wildlife garden environment (NB - This was recorded on camera 2 as she wanted a different camera!) 19:27:05 – 19:27:29 (24 secs)

Yes shall we just hop off? Hi, hi I. Let's do an investigation. You can't smell things. Only me can smell things. I got down. How about you, you can use your magical powers to turn into a rainbow black puppy and I can be the baby puppy. You can ....

Outdoor classroom 20:38:45 - 20:39:27 (32 secs)

I'm going to cook you. That looks like a yummy baby. Pretend she said Stop, stop it I'm a baby. Pretend, pretend you nearly put me in the oven. Who put her on here. Pretend you're sick. Where are we going to go now? OK I'll go and get my ....

#### **Camera 10**

*Sound did not capture*

#### **Child 9**

Wildlife garden environment 21:13:04 – 21:19:35 (6 mins and 31 secs)

Yes. Go that way. Where's, no. It's my turn now. Watch this. Fast. Try and get, It's mine. Watch this. That's mine. That's mine. Now it's my turn. Actually it's my turn. No. That's my car. I'm on the bridge. You need to hide. A bear! Me! I got mine!

Outdoor classroom 22:02:52 – 22:07:53 (5 mins and 1 sec)

Catch. Watch this. Do this. Do this. This is, oh yes. Whoosh, are you going to sit down? Sit down? Stinky socks. Yes. You haven't got any, come back. Get it, get it. No. Me. Just a little one here. A can I have a go now? Is that yours?

Indoor classroom 22:22:52 -

That's not a dinosaur. That's a stegosaurus. (*Inaudible from this point on as so much background noise*)

#### **Camera dirty blk**

*Sound did not capture*

## **Setting two, visit one of phase three data collection**

### **Child 1**

Natural environment 19:19:30 - 19:21:09 (1 min 39 secs)

Z I've got lots. Z. You can go here. Wait for me, wait for me. Marshmallows. Let's go get some monsters. That's not good. They sticky. Not good. They're not go. They're sticky. Come on, get the monsters. Oh no we should go and get the big bad wolf and....

Indoor classroom 21:52:48 – 21:54:40 (1 min 52 secs)

Oh no. Not yet. I (name) not yet. O (name) we've got, I (name) don't come on, no, no, no, don't touch the baby, no, no, that's my chair. Don't, I'm doing that as well. That's daddy's chair. That's my chair. Sit there. We've got mummy and daddy. You can't be daddy. I ....

### **Child 2**

Natural environment 23:17:09 – 23:19:47 (2 mins 38 secs)

Whoaa, look, Roarr, Look, there's the tyre, shall we go in the tyre? Yes. C (name), C, C, C, shall we go and do roly poly? Let's play roly poly C. Shall we do roly, poly? C. C. Guess what. Stop. C. C. You can go without me if you want

Indoor classroom 01:46:53 – 1:49:57 (3 mins 4 secs)

C (name) you have that one. You can play with me. We need this. Let's build. C. We're, C, you're just jealous now cos you're not coming to my house. If you've got yellow, if you've got blue you can come to my house. Match, match. Yellow and blue, I have

### **Child 3**

Natural environment 23:17:09 – 23:19:47 (2 mins 38 secs)

*Recording did not work*

Indoor classroom 10:44:55 – 10:46:44 (1 min 49 sec)

Dinner. Peas are not ready yet. M they're not ready, cooked yet. I'm going to put it on there. M I'm going to put these in a pot and then put it on the cooker. They've got flowers in them. It's a big pot. Errrr, nasty! Yes. Baby's going to ....

### **Child 4**

Natural environment 20:38:48 - 20:39:52 (1 min 4 secs)

Shall we paint the tyre J (name), Shall we paint the tyres? Yes. You have that. Can you lift it up? Shall we carry it across. No, not in here J. Alright. Put it in here. Shall we make another puddle J, shall I make another puddle? We need to make...

Indoor classroom 23:27:31-23:31:35 (4 mins 4 secs)

B, B look. Hey look at this. Shall we play now? That's right L. I can be your best friend if you like today. There's another L. There's another C. That's enough now L. That's' enough. I'm making a diplodocus. Wiggly wobbly. Look at this L. Can I have a ....

### **Child 5**

Natural environment - 21:18:36 – 21:20:12 (1 min 36)

I can see grass. I can see lots of grass. I kicked it down. I kicked it. Can you see. Mind! (Only 21 words - recording then was switched off!)

Indoor classroom – 00:10:32 – 00:20:24 (9 mins and 52 secs)

Why is yours off? Why is your camera off? No. What about A? What about A? A. Oh! B, B, L took my car, she took my car. No. No I want it now. No I had it first. I had it first. Yes. She's lying. I had it first.

### **Child 6**

Natural environment 21:21:08 – 21:24:49 (3 mins and 41 secs)

It's a waterfall. What's happening here? Look at that. No. We're not allowed to do that. There's nothing on the grass. I'm watching it A. We need a ...it's water. We need more, we need more. It's not much mud. Can I do that? It's stinky. It's not for standing (in it)

Indoor classroom - 00:03:04 - 00:04:43 (1 min 39 secs)

T, T, look. Watch this. T. Look. Rooarrh. My daddy has a car like that. Do you know what my dad said? My dad's car went like that. Yes. I don't. I don't want it on. I don't want it on anymore. (42 words - took camera off)

### **Child 7**

Natural environment 14:14:33 – 14:19:00 (3 mins 27secs)

J. Come here. Look, I've got a camera. Its turned on. I want to press the top button. I've got it on. How do I do it? Can you do it for me? Can you press mine J? I got it. You have to press the buttons. Let's go. Stop!

Indoor classroom 00:20:10 – 00:23:01 (2 mins 51 secs)

You are stupid. No, no, no, no. It's mine. C. Stay. Stay here. Stay right here ok A 'cos they will run ok. Don't spoil with violence. What's, stay there 'til I come. No. Don't go on there. Try to walk backwards. Walk backwards. Ah zombie, zombie. Just be nice.

### **Child 8**

Natural environment

Have you got a camera too? Why not? Do you know that? I done it all by myself. (18 words - camera then switched off)

Indoor classroom 00:09:39- 00:12:14 (2 mins and 35 secs)

If you stand up I can see you. Stand up and say cheese. We're not allowed to touch the buttons. C look. Look what I've got. I've got a hairbrush. Yes we had fire. Put that back. E your thing is down there. It is really. Look what I've got.

### **Child 9**

Natural environment 21:29:24 – 21:34:44 (5 mins and 20 secs)

There's the tyre. Let's go. Ah the cut the grass. I'm in the grass. Yeaahhhh.

There's some water. I'm getting water. Water. I need some more water. I need more water. T, dig, dig, dig. Hey! I need some water. I'm getting water. I need some more water. Put this....

Indoor classroom 00:21:10 – 00:31:11 (10 mins and 1 sec)

I got some sugar. We need some more. Do you want my car, car? Do you want that? I found that. Whooaah. Who wants ice cream? Who wants ice cream? Who wants ice cream? I want that one. Who wants some ice cream? Who wants some ice cream? Who wants...



## **Setting two, visit two of phase three data collection**

### **Child 7**

Natural environment 22:54:26 – 22:55:26 (1 min)

A bit more. We need to put that there. We need trees. Can I have some grass? Can you, can you pour liquid on the mud? Stop! Some on there ok. Can you put more on there? Can you put some on here? Yes. I'm coming. It escaped into a ....

Same child had a different camera in the secret garden (outdoor) **Camera 8**

Outdoor classroom 15:06:00 – 15:07:21 (1 min 21 secs)

I didn't have a go. I can't do it. I can't use my own of them. (starts singing to self as running) Seesaw, she's got a seesaw. Seesaw, seesaw, she's got a seesaw, she's got a seesaw, she's got a seesaw, she's got a seesaw. Crash. Oh no. Hi. Just keep going here. Just straight, just....

### **Child 1**

Natural environment 22:49:43 – 22:52:00 (2 min 17 secs)

Bye bye E (name). I'm coming. Come, look. This is tentacles. His tentacles are, I think yours. What, where? Where? It's still tied up. I'm trying to find some insects but they're trying to hide away from me. Where are you? Where are you E? You two? You two? I see.....

Outdoor classroom 20:03:33 – 20:04:11 (38 secs)

I've got lots of stuff. Come on let's, let's go in, let's go in hut just there. Oh so heavy. Can we carry it to our house. It's over there. That black box. We need that blue thing. We need that blue thing. Look you've only got one thing H (name)

### **Child 2**

Natural environment 03:34:26 – 03:40:33 (5 mins 53 secs) N.B. a long time as he was running around and around on his own and not talking for big chunks of time Shall we go down this way? Shall we go down this...Oh! No. That's not fair! C (name)! And that's the water! Come on. One more day. Does that tree have flowers? But apples have to grow this big. We have to wait til. We have to grow. They have to ....

Outdoor classroom 00:08:37 – 00:11:14 (2 mins 37 secs)

C (name) hold on. Hold on. Let's go in to there. Can somebody help me? We're trying to pull C but we can't. I think he's...you have to be strong for this. Shall we run with the rope really fast? A! Oh A! A! B they won't let me have....

### **Child 3**

Natural environment 11:28:22 – 11:30:43 (2 mins 21 secs)

Come on dad let's go. Come on J. This way darling. There you are. Let's go and get, let's go and, let's go and get E and ask for him.....that way! He's in the maze. That way wolf. That way to the jail. In, in, in, in, in, in,

Outdoor classroom 08:40:24 – 08:42:48 (2 mins 24 sec)

Watch this. Look. One, two. T you hold this bit there. One, two, three, pull. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three. O, O, Let's trap this One, two, three, I've got this. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three. I'm coming when I've done this

### **Child 4**

Natural environment 00:24:33 – 00:26:54 (2 min 21 secs)

That's not right. It's not blowing away. Can I have that? I know where J is. Come this way, I'll show you. I'll show you where he is. He's in there. He's in here. Don't worry. Yeas. I saw him. Let's go out. He's not in here. There he is!

Outdoor classroom 21:41:39-21:42:49 (1 mins 10 secs)

Help me B. Help me E. It doesn't matter who is. It doesn't matter. Just give it to me right. It doesn't matter who is. It doesn't matter who is. Right you hold that there. It doesn't matter who is. It doesn't matter. Shall I help? Shall I help? Yes.

### **Child 5**

Natural environment - 01:35:47 – 01:36:49 (1 min 2 secs)

I've got one. It was under the mud. We could put all this in all the mud and ants. Got it! Bye bye ants, see you tomorrow. Hey. Why's it not going in? Oh. Watch. When you get out. IS this on. I don't mind about that. Yes. They're too.....

Outdoor classroom – 22:14:36 – 22:15:59 (1 min and 23 secs)

Look what I've got! I'm very tired. Um no. Kind of, It's not time I know it's not. I don't need to press the buttons. Oh, what does this do? What does this do? What does this do? Yeah. I don't know. Can I press the button? What do we....

### **Child 6**

Natural environment 01:40:52 – 01:43:30 (2 mins and 38 secs)

Let's leave our hands down. No, let's leave our hands down. Leave our hands down. Oh. I fell down, all the way there. I went ooollooop! I didn't know how I rolled down. I don't know. M watch this! I don't remember this. Charge! Yeah. Jump! I jumped over the.....

Outdoor classroom - 22:06:26 – 22:08:54 (1 min 32 secs)

Yeah cos it's not ours is it? It's someone else's'. Yeah she's giving the cameras. But we can still share it. Me too. Watch. Oh man! Here's the sugar. I've got some. Yes. T, an egg, an egg, an egg. Cheese. How do you take pictures? I don't know. Yeah!

### **Child 8**

Natural environment 02:03:38 – 02:04:40 (1 min and 2 secs)

Sit on your bottom and go backwards that way, and go down like a big slide. Come on you guys. I can bump into you. And that'll come. Guys! When you put this, hey! Move out the way! Oh guess what, who's pumped? Do you want to climb up the ...

Outdoor classroom 22:32:21-22:35:25 (3 mins and 4 secs)

Did you know? I am, I'm a number ten. Look. Can I do that? Hey wait for me. H what number are you? Six? Is that before number ten or after number ten? Nine? B? We can go in. We can go in there. No not at the weekend. Go....

### **Child 9**

Natural environment

*No data – did not record*

Outdoor classroom 22:22:12 – 22:24:38 (2 mins and 26 secs)

That is my bed. That is my bed. I'm fine. This is a big bed. That is my bed. My turn. We aren't sharing. Me not sharing at all. I want to go. H get the bed. H get the bed. They got the bed. I can't pull it. I

## **Setting two, visit three of phase three data collection**

### **Child 1**

Indoor classroom

*No recording captured*

Outdoor classroom 18:52:26 – 18:53:05 (39 secs)

I (name) do you remember? You need to sit down on that part. Sit down there. I (name) you need to sit down for ideas. Still sit down because you need to sit for ideas. No we need to sit down this way. You will fall me off won't you? Yes let's...

### **Camera 3**

Indoor classroom

*No recording captured*

Outdoor classroom

*Although recordings were captured no sound was recorded so data invalid*

### **Camera 6**

Indoor classroom

*Although recordings were captured no sound was recorded so data invalid*

Outdoor classroom

*Although recordings were captured no sound was recorded so data invalid*

### **Child 6**

Indoor classroom

*No recording captured*

Outdoor classroom - 21:49:31 – 21:51:48 (1 min 43 secs)

Dinosaur, Dinosaur, Dinosaur, G, run from the dino, help, help, help, come on.

Dinosaur, Dinosaur, Dinosaur, Dinosaur, we did. There's a dinosaur behind you G.

Dinosaur! Look at me stinky Dinosaur. Hey stinky Dinosaur, you're poo! Stinky

Dinosaur. They're all dead. They're all dead. G they're all dead. I haven't .....

### **Child 8**

Indoor classroom

*Recording inaudible due to such loud volume of background noise*

Outdoor classroom 21:17:30 – 21:18:58 (1 mins and 28 secs)

One, two, three. What's the time Mr Wolf. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen. One, two, three, four. Stop. No I want a

turn. Stop right there. It's sixteen o'clock. Stop right there. A hundred a clock. One o'clock. One, two three. One....

### **Setting three, visit one of phase three data collection**

#### **Child 1**

Outdoor environment 18:30:28 - 18:31:55 (1 min 27 secs)

We just go in here. Whaaeyy look at me F (name). F. look. Look one legged. One legged. Hey. Hey B (name) look at me. I'm doing one legged. Wheeyyyy. Hey. Look, look at this. Look. Look F do you know I can go on the grown up one now. Yes. Yes.

Indoor classroom 19:12:50 – 19:13:33 (43 secs)

My, my mummy going to pick me up. Don't want snack too. Make mummy a picture. Make mummy a picture? My got the colours. Water went on my picture and then it made a, then it made a dog picture. Yes. And then when, and then daddy when we went,

#### **Child 2**

Outdoor environment 07:18:59 – 07:19:35 (36 secs)

Look at this. You have got a pick axe and you can, you've got a pick axe. You've got a pick axe and I've got ..you have to stand like this when you've got a pick axe. A shield is potion. A shield is potion. Yes. You can. O, O...

Indoor classroom 07:03:59– 07:06:36 (2 min 37 sec)

O, O, O, O, O, O, O, O. I want this cut in half, O, O, Look, look, look, look. I done it. C (name), C, C, C, C, C, C. Do you want to play fortnight? You have that one, I'll have that one and I have this one. You...

#### **Child 3**

Outdoor environment 21:11:25 - 20:14:27 (3 min 2 secs)

Do this for higher. This still higher. Um boy, boy. We go higher. The little swing now. Don't swing me. We're big girls. Higher. Higher. The big swing. O watch. I go higher. Yes. Stop. O. No. I showing O. Boys and girls go on there. O the big swing ....

Indoor classroom 21:18:44-21:19:45 (1 min 1 sec)

Are we having a little panto? Happy birthday to baby. You have to sing that as well. After mine. Happy birthday to baby. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to baby. Happy birthday to baby. Your birthday now. Its yours. Some for you and some for me. No. J (name) stay....

#### **Child 4**

Outdoor environment - 21:46:40 – 21:49:15 (2 mins and 35 secs)

We don't need that cardboard do we? No. Let's tip it out. We're not playing basketball. We're going the wrong...Shall we wait for it L. Shall we wait for it? Shall we wait for it? Look. Keep it on the ground ok, keep it on the ground. You can't can...(you)

Indoor classroom – 21:09:20 – 21:11:23 (2 mins and 3 secs)

I need some red tape. Yes. All the way there. It's coming. Can I have some red tape? Please. I want some red. Can I have some red tape? About that much. Can you stick mine on cos mine is...I want mine. I want just a little bit. On my....

#### **Child 5**

Outdoor environment - 21:01:40 – 21:11:10: (10 mins and 30 secs)

I want to help wash it too. We need water. More. Can I use your scrubbing brush? Could I use your scrubbing brush? I've got a brush for you. I find you one. I find you one. Can I have a brush? Where?? Here you go. J (name), look what I....

Indoor classroom - 20:46:12 - 20:50:13 (4 min 1 sec)

That's going when I go to my school. Da, da, da, da, da. No, not yet. I'm not even five yet. I haven't been yet. Yes. When I go. This is a triceratops. Let's go. Stop it. Roooar, roooooar, stay there. Ahhhh. These are dinosaurs. I want one. That's ok.

#### **Child 6**

Outdoor environment 14:01:06 – 14:03:25 (2 mins 19secs)

Ooh look at that big apple! Washing this. Put it in the microwave. Look at that. Apple pie soup. Apple pie soup. Move out the way then. Just this little bit. Do you want real cake? I'm making the sauce. It needs sugar. Put it all in. The dirt. I....

Indoor classroom 13:31:46 – 13:33:35 (1 mins 51 secs)

O (name), what? You need me school. No. Never. No never. For like sixty months. No. No. I don't know. (Asked to draw favourite thing about pre-school) That's a wiggly worm rolled up. And that's a roller coaster. O that's the, yep. Oh I forgot something, a dinosaur and that's all. And...I'm going to go now. (rushed back off to play outside again – this was the only time he was indoors. 49 words)

#### **Child 7**

Outdoor environment 05:36:27 – 05:38:53 (2 min 26 secs)

Right. Which story would you like? Mr Clumsy? Mr Bump? Aarrgghh! Mr Rush is like this. Mr Rush runs round like this. Do you want a bedtime story? Which one do you want? This is ... Mr Rush. This is baby time. I don't like that one. I've got these. It's ....

Indoor classroom 06:50:32-06:52:06 (1 min 34 secs)

I wonder whose drawers that is. K (name). Can I go in? Can I go in? Please? Your legs are in the way. Oh somebody's at the door. Ow! Don't shut the door! Baby shall we stay in here? I've never stayed in here. Shall we go outside? Don't go outside....

#### **Child 8**

Outdoor environment (free-play) 21:22:46 – 21:24:30 (1 min 44 secs)

We have to share those brushes don't we? So here you go. This is my monster truck. This is somebody else's lorry. C (name) I'm washing your lorry! Now I'd better rinse. Another rinse. Another rinse. I have a cleaner and a car wash. It's a car wash and it's really (important)

Outdoor environment but structured (snack table monitor) 21:39:49 - 21:41:07 (1 min 18 secs) This child did not play indoors at any point during my visit so for the purposes of comparison this vignette comes from when he was being snack monitor and it was an adult led experience compared to the free play of above.

Milk or water? I'll get the cup. I've given him the cup. He doesn't want this yellow. OK. Milk. Milk now. Oh we haven't got any more. I have a pig farm. I always watch things. On my daddy's phone. Yes but I watch loads of programmes on it and

#### **Child 9**

Outdoor environment 22:04:39 – 22:06:08 (1 mins and 29 secs)

I want to hide here. Let's play more hide and seek, more hide and seek. I want to count. One, two, three, You have to hide you two. Three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. Coming ready or not. Here I come! N (name), N. I'm finding N. Found you!

Indoor classroom 20:58:04 – 21:04:15 (6 mins and 11 secs)

N (name), N, I want to have a go. N. (asked what colour tape wanted) Red tape. I have got a big line. (asked how many times need to cut) Ten! That was quick! I've finished. I want my turn. I want to use these ones. I've got these ones. I've got my own scissors. On mine, I've got mine. I'm going to..... (NB - only spoke when an adult was present)

### **Setting three, visit two of phase three data collection**

#### **Child 10**

Outdoor environment 18:41:46 – 18:43:35

Is this N's? That one is for N. It is N's. Hey don't do that H. He's falling over. This is N's. Let's go. He couldn't get us. He couldn't get us now. Look now. Is that yours? I'm going to tell O. Tell O. Now I'll wait for you.

Indoor classroom 19:34:36 – 19:38:25 (3 mins 49 secs)

I need your help O. I can't, O turn it over. We need to switch it off. Yeah. Yeah. It's working. No. I've had enough of this. O! My camera is nearly off. E, can you call out, I want to use the book. Oh no the drawer is really ....

#### **Child 11**

Outdoor environment 18:41:40 - 18:42:11 (31 secs)

Yes you just drink some of mine then. Right don't go on, I was on that first. I was just having a drink and I'm, then I was going to go back onto that one. Give that one back please. Yes so, I can have it. Yes I can cos....

Indoor classroom 19:19:23 – 19:27:07 (7 mins and 44 secs)

I don't know. Yes. Yes. Hello. Help me. Have you had a nice day? Are you having a nice day building? Somebody's at the door! N! Who is it? N! O, it's N! Ow! N! Ow! N. N. You're mine and N's friend and nobodys friend ever again. Yes

#### **Child 5**

Outdoor environment 07:22:07 – 07:23:48 (1 min 41 secs)

We need sand don't we and lots of water. That's for the dinosaur, doesn't it J (name). We need lots of sand. Uhoh it's all slipping out. We've got to make enough. We need water. Stop you're making it ...it's our last chance! I hope it works J. No. Now it's....

Indoor classroom

*No play indoors at all throughout the observation period*

#### **Child 6**

Outdoor environment 20:08:13 - 20:10:01 (1 min 48 secs)

Are you my friend? Hey! What's happened? Um T, I think he just, we are dead. Are you going to play with us? Are you sad now? Cos J took your hat off? No he hasn't fallen. Not so fast! Watch this. O. T hurt J and T is in.....

Indoor classroom 20:12:02-20:13:14 (1 min 12 sec)

Did you see what I was doing? You didn't see me on the camera? Watch this. Oh. I need it like this J (name). I'm making it a bit tighter. That's my hat. Hey! Don't steal my hat! That one's too big. Put it on backwards. Let's do some work now.

#### **Child 12**

Outdoor environment - 21:52:40 – 21:54:29 (1 mins and 49 secs)

O I'm evil. I am evil power. I am, that's a fire. It's a camp fire. Do you know, do you know, look let's both be power. Yaeh. Let's go on the tyres Unibear (teddy name) and evil power. Step back down. To discover oh (singing), to discover. I'm going to go inside.

Indoor classroom – 21:50:11 – 21:51:51 (1 mins and 40 secs)

Put it back in ready to do the, ready for a story? I am dizzy! Up up and away! Up and away! Do you know, do you know, Oh look mine fell down here. Pretend there's a sink here. And we take them back up. Ahhhh L to the rescue!

#### **Camera 7**

*Camera did not work – no recordings taken*

#### **Child 7**

Outdoor environment 14:23:31 – 14:26:33 (3 mins 2 secs)

Hellppppp! Hellppppp!! Hellppppp! Hellppppp! E (name) quickly hide! E hide from the monster. Quickly. Oh no. Hellppp! Heelpppp! E quickly. No – yes this scare us. E. I'm coming. The monsters are after E. Quickly. Wait for E. Wait for E. Yes and I've got a yellow camera. E, E, E quickly

Indoor classroom 14:03:30 – 14:05:12 (1 mins 42 secs)

E (name), E, I've got two disco lights for you. I've got two disco lights for you. You just keep them ok? I've got a Barbie doll. E, shall I get you some more treasure rock? E? I got you some treasure rocks. E. E. E I got the treasure rocks

### **Child 13**

Outdoor environment 05:39:04 – 05:40:03 (59 secs)

I can. Can you do this? Can you balance on one leg? Look what I can do. We can dance. I can hop on one leg on this log. Watch. Shall we pull that string? Shall we put that string off A? No! No! You're trapped in there now! Come...

Indoor classroom 05:31:02-05:32:56 (1 min 54 secs)

Shall we put all these tomatoes in here and make them in sauce? Now we are cooking. Now we put some banana in. No you're not putting the banana. Now we have to do the end. Yes. Shall we tip it all out? Here's some food. Here's some food. Would....

### **Child 8**

Outdoor environment (free-play) 21:02:30 – 21:04:03 (1 min 33 secs)

I'll sit in the sink. I'm sitting in the sink. Careful you don't fall off it. Are these yours? I'll go tell O. Why? O. O. O. I don't know who are these sunglasses. Here you are! Let's go back to the kitchen. Let's go in the kitchen. I have....

*This child did not play indoors at any point during my visit so no indoor footage was available*

### **Child 14**

Outdoor environment 20:49:27 – 22:51:43 (2 mins and 16 secs)

We're ninja branches! This is for power! That's Z. No, I mean just now I'm doing, wait! That's big. I'm going to slide down this. Yes. O I'm going to shoot you. I've got that on my, I've got that on my peg. It's good. We're gunners. We're gunners. Let's....

Indoor classroom

No recording – child asked for camera to be removed and said they didn't want it on anymore so their wishes were adhered to and recording was stopped and camera was removed

### **Child 15**

Outdoor environment 07:31:49 – 07:32:56 (1 min 7 secs)

You don't want to tumble again. You already had a tumble. E! Lets, let's let's go hunting! Let's go hunting! We're going hunting! We're going hunting! We're going hunting! We're going hunting! Yes. No cos we are playing with someone else. We only want three teams. We don't want four....

Indoor classroom 08:30:21 – 08:31:52 (1 min 32 secs)

How about we pretend that you two are the big sisters. Well, and the other sister has a pet tiger too. And a pet, and she's got pet ants. But you can't have this cos this is one from my actual home. And this is mine from my actual home.

## **Setting four, visit one of phase three data collection**

### **Child 1**

Forest environment 19:15:41 – 19:17:54 (2 mins 13 secs)

That's for mine. In the nursery. I got this. Hey. Crash. Crash. Not yet. I want to, I want to go with you. Boo. I can't see L. Again. Ready, set, go. Set, set, set, go. No, I push you. I hit me. I want to do it. Again I .....

Indoor/outdoor classroom

*Child had gone home early so no recording opportunity available.*

### **Child 2**

Forest environment 19:00:38 – 19:01:42 (1 min 4 secs)

Let it go! Oh look here's an ice palace. In here. Let it go, let it go, let it go, let it go.

Let it go. Anymore. Let it go, let it go, let it go, anymore. Can't do that anymore.

Let it go. Let's sing. Let's go in. Quick.

Indoor/outdoor classroom

*Sound did not capture*

### **Child 3**

Forest environment 07:57:30 – 08:00:03 (2 mins 33 secs)

I just tapped you on the shoulder when you weren't looking. Me and you have got the same cameras. Catch me. I went that way and then had to stop. Come on. J (name) catch me if you can. J catch me if you can. Can I help? Look. I want ....

Indoor/outdoor classroom (outdoor classroom 10:39:37 - 10:41:30 (1 min and 53 secs))

A (name) can I have a go, can I have a go. Please. No. No. Hey no, no. Can I, can I have one of those big tubes? Like, like A has. Please can I have a turn. Can I, can I, Can I have a turn A? Now that's really

*Didn't go inside at any point during the recording.*

### **Child 4**

Forest environment 20:36:34 – 20:37:23 (49 secs)

We're making a plan to be cheeky. And lying for little stories. Yes. Well it's like a scary monster. And yes. And let's act it now. Come on let's do it. What colour would you like? Purple? Purple. Now pull. We're making a scary story. Let's do like this. Now .....

Indoor/outdoor classroom (outdoor 23:18:01 – 23:19:14 (1 min and 13 secs))

We're making it blonde. Cos brown is yucky isn't it? Let's make it blonde. Chop. Cos now we need to make it blonde. We have to make it blonde. We have to do it and then it will be blonde. Yes and then when she comes to see you. Let's ....

*Didn't play inside at any point during the recording.*

### **Child 5**

Forest environment 21:19:48 – 21:22:43 (2 min and 55 secs)

Yes and I will do some this. Look, look there's your camera. I said take it, A it's here. Yes and then, Go, go away, now, no I've got a idea. I don't know. Here I go.

Ok. I can make it round there. G, G, G, G, G, I've (got idea)

Indoor/outdoor classroom (Outdoor - 00:09:44 - 00:16:25 (6 mins 41 secs))

Beep beep. Beep beep. Where's your camera? I've got number six. That's not a car. Let's knock it off. Cos it's, that's our safe. Yes. G. Hey my camera. Me go there.

Yes. Go. Yes. I'm a big girl. I'm a big girl. I doing this. She's walking. L, she ....

*Didn't play inside at any point during the recording.*



### **Child 6**

Forest environment 00:15:41 – 00:17:46 (2 mins and 5 secs)

I got a big stick. I got a big stick. I got a big stick. Wow I got a big stick. I got a big stick. Yes. Look at this one. I got this one. Look at this. I got a stick. Two sticks everyone. Look at my sticks. They're ....

Indoor/outdoor classroom

*Camera did not work so no data captured*

### **Child 7**

Forest environment 21:39:07 – 21:41:44 (2 mins and 37 secs)

There we go. I cut the tree down. I cut the tree down. Look I've got one. D (the letter). Crash. I've got a sword. One, two, three, I want to do this. This way. It's bit wobbly. I want help. I want help. I had that H. H I had that.

Indoor/outdoor classroom (Outdoor – 00:21:42 – 00:31:04 (9 mins and 22 sec))

Cheese, cheese, cheese S (name). But I had it first. I've got a camera. Can I have this? Round and round. That used to be sick. Leave that to dry. Let's put this on here. That's it. And right. Now this go on here. I dropped it. You might spill this.

*Didn't play inside at any point during the recording.*

### **Setting four, visit two of phase three data collection**

#### **Child 1**

Forest environment 19:19:06 – 19:21:33 (2 mins 27 secs)

I want to stay here. Can I go just here? Up here like this. Up. I'm not going in the fire. I'm going up. Look at this acorn (acorn). Look. Acorn. I'm going to get, look there's one. Let's sit down here. Acorn. L. Here. I've found it. There. T. T.

Indoor/outdoor classroom

*Child had gone home early so no recording opportunity available.*

#### **Child 3**

Forest environment

*Child did not want camera on in this environment, so no recording captured here.*

Indoor/outdoor classroom (outdoor classroom 10:41:53 – 10:54:30 (12 mins 37 secs))

J (name). Do you think that we can be on the pirate ship, because, Who's birthday? Why? Why? J. J. What shall we do with this water? There's a waterfall. If it gets too high it will just go through won't it? Who gets the water coming? Hello. Who got that

*Didn't go inside at any point during the recording.*

#### **Child 4**

Forest environment 21:23:14 – 21:24:28 (1 min 14 secs)

I'm going to go on now. I can, I can do it by my own. I can just, yes. I am. Mind out, mind out R. Even further. Blast! Ok. We want it big don't we? Bigger. But I can do this. No I can do it with my legs.

Indoor/outdoor classroom

*Child did not want camera on in this environment, so no recording captured here.*

#### **Child 2**

Forest environment 06:00:57 – 06:02:45 (1 min 48 secs)

It's just a monkey. They're nice monkeys. They are. Here's your other nana (banana). They're nice monkeys. They are, really are. Are you from the zoo? They're just from the zoo. It's ok. And we're Elsa. Let it go. Find it then A. Are you just the monkey? Wait a minute.

Indoor/outdoor classroom

*Child did not want camera on in this environment, so no recording captured here.*

#### **Child 5**

Forest environment 21:15:47 – 21:16:35 (48 secs)

Come on dad. Come on mum, Let's go in to the den. Bye L. Are you my best, are you my best friend? Yes and L is your friend. I'm coming B. L I'm not your best friend anymore. I don't know when I first come. Isn't L our friend?

Indoor/outdoor classroom 00:32:27 - 00:34:00 (1 min 33 secs)

Puddles! (singing to self) Splash in the puddles. Come in the car. Here we go in the daddy car. Here we go and nee na na, my must live. My mum drives in a rusty car. Here my car. Here we go in a rusty car. Rusty car. You can't have them. Let's

*Didn't go inside at any point during the recording.*

#### **Child 8**

Forest environment 15:00:34 – 15:01:38 (1 min and 4 secs)

Not too much. Not too much. I said not too much B. Now it's all messy. Oh. And fit in, it's right in here. So, we can mix it. Look here what I can do R. I've got this. Course I can. I'm not silly. Yes. Done it. So, how

*NB - Same child had dirty blk camera on in afternoon as wanted a blue one!*

Camera dirty blk - Indoor/outdoor classroom (outdoor classroom 05:49:10 - 05:52:26 (3 mins 16 secs))

Here comes the water. Here comes the water. Some water. Some water. Here comes the smelly pie. Oh dear. There's, there's some water. That's P. P. Yes. Stop. Now pack it up. I need it please. More water. A green one and a red one. There. Let's go away. That

*Didn't go inside at any point during the recording.*

### **Child 7**

Forest environment 17:19:50 – 17:22:13 (2 mins and 23 secs)

I've got a small stick. But I want to put the stick right in there. That's not big. That's small. Whooh, wooah, wooah, woohooah. Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh, whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh whoosh whoosh. Whoosh. Boxes and paddle sticks! It's balancing. It's balancing. Whaaa it's balancing. Whooh, Whooh!

Indoor/outdoor classroom (Outdoor – 19:39:22 – 19:41:06 (1 min and 44 sec))

It's still dark. It's still, it's still wet in there. Oh no. I got wet. With an apron on. Apron. Lasagna and garlic bread. Yoghurt we had flower yogurt. Yes. Yes. It's wet. Now is the water really dirt. Dirt eurggh. It's wet dirty isn't it? We'd better go and

*Didn't play inside at any point during the recording.*

**Setting four, visit three of phase three data collection**

**Child 4**

Indoor classroom 23:47:49 - 23:48:35 (46 secs)

And it's a mermaid one. Mermaid. Yea. You have to have a real tail. And then you have to swim. There's a big pool and you have to swim in it. We're going swimming in a pond. With fish. With ducks. And there's another pond. A duck pond. Yes.

And

Outdoor classroom 23:49:02 - 23:49:21 (19 secs)

Real mermaid tails. And you have to practice swimming in a pond. You have to get a real tail for my party. And you have to practice swimming in a pool. So you have to get a real tail. That's what's making, my dad's making one for me. Your dad

**Child 6**

Indoor classroom 09:02:37 – 09:10:34 (9 mins 57 secs)

J, J. I got a camera J. J, J. Here you go. Daddy's here. Look at me. K, K, K. I got a camera. I got a camera. I can go that way. Number, R, where are you R. R, R, there you are. L do you want a camera?

Outdoor classroom 09:39:09 – 09:45:09 (6 mins)

Did you see that balancing? Did you see that? I went on there. Look. Whoooah.

What are you trying to do? Do you want this to put on? Do you want to put this on?

It's working. I want to do that. I want to do that. Look at my

**Child 8**

Outdoor classroom 00:23:51 - 00:34:05 (10 min 14 secs)

Yes. Look J (Practitioner name). A camera. Now which way. M. G isn't. J, J, J, J, J, J, J, J, J, J, J, I can't read this story. I can't read this story J. J can I have this story here? Yes. What? What? Orange. Orange. Again. Again. Meeow. Bread.

Bread. Bear.

*Didn't go inside at any point during the recording.*

**Child 7**

Indoor classroom 16:21:18 – 16:22:23 (1 min and 5 secs)

It's really hard now. It's really hard now. No it's stuck. Look. It's hard. I'm making a big one. Skip, skip, skip, skip. Where is she? Is she out there? Where is, oh look. Yeah, it's been raining. Come on let's go and find, shall we go and find L?

*Didn't go outside at any point during the recording.*

**Camera dirty black**

Outdoor classroom

*Did not speak at any time during short recording. Played with camera continually and then switched it off!*

*Didn't play inside at any point during the recording.*

**Appendix Fourteen**

Word type	Word spoken	No of times	TTR calculation
Noun	D (boy's name)	3	
	Pole	1	
	Marks	1	
	Number	1	
	Two	1	
	Charge	1	
	Way	1	7/9 = 77.8%
Pronoun	I	1	
	You	2	
	Your	1	
	Him	1	4/5 = 80%
Verb	Go	4	
	Must	2	
	Watch	1	
	I'm	1	
	Want	1	
	Catch	1	
	Pushing	1	
	Touching	1	
	Is	2	
	Set	1	
	Get	1	11/16 = 68.8
Adverb	Again	2	
	Too	1	
	Out	1	
	Up	1	4/5 = 80%
Adjective	Ready	2	
	Steady	2	
	Little	1	
	Back	1	4/6 = 66.6%
Preposition	On	1	
	Of	1	2/2 = 100%
Exclamation	Oh	1	
	No	1	2/2 = 100%
Determiner	A	1	
	The	2	2/3 = 66.6%
Connective	To	2	1 / 2 = 50%

**Overall TTR: 37/50 = 74% lexical diversity**

TTR calculation: number of different words/number of utterances.  
Higher percentage = higher quality.

Lexical Analysis for setting 1, visit 2, child 6 – wildlife garden

Word type	Word spoken	No of times	TTR calculation
Noun	A (name)	2	
	Bubblegum	4	
	Girl	3	
	Forest	1	
	Prize	2	
	Power	1	6/13 = 46.2%
Pronoun	I	2	
	We	2	
	It	1	
	This	2	
	What	1	5/8 = 62.5%
	Want	2	
Verb	Have	1	
	See	3	
	I'll	1	
	Show	1	
	Got	1	
	Go	1	
	Is	1	
	Can't	1	
	She's	1	10/13 = 76.9%
	Right	1	1/1 = 100%
Adverb	Out	1	
	So	1	2/2 = 100%
Connective	And	1	1/1 = 100%
Determiner	The	1	
	Your	2	
	A	2	3/5 = 60%
Preposition	To	3	
	From	2	
	Under	1	
	In	1	4/7 = 57.1%

**Overall TTR: 32/50 = 64% lexical diversity**

TTR calculation: number of different words/number of utterances.  
Higher percentage = higher quality.

Lexical Analysis for setting 1, visit 3, child 9 – outdoor classroom

Word type	Word spoken	No of times	TTR calculation
Noun	Socks	1	
	One	1	
	A (name)	1	3/3 = 100%
Pronoun	I	1	
	You	2	
	That	1	
	Me	1	
	It	2	5/7 = 71.4%
	Catch	1	
	Watch	1	
Verb	Do	2	
	Go	1	
	Have	1	
	going	1	
	Are	1	
	Sit	2	
	Haven't	1	
	Got	1	
	Come	1	
	Get	2	
	Can	1	
	Is	2	14/18 = 77.8%
	Here	1	
	Now	1	2/2 = 100%
	Stinky	1	
Adjective	Down	2	
	Back	1	
	Little	1	
	Just	1	5/6 = 83.3%
	Oh	1	
Exclamation	Yes	2	
	No	1	
	whoosh	1	4/5 = 80%
	This	4	
Determiner	Yours	1	
	A	2	
	Any	1	4/8 = 50%
Preposition	To	1	1/1 = 100%

**Overall TTR: 38/50 = 76% lexical diversity**

TTR calculation: number of different words/number of utterances.  
Higher percentage = higher quality.

Lexical Analysis for setting 2, visit 1, child 4 – indoor classroom

Word type	Word spoken	No of times	TTR calculation
Noun	Diplodocus	1	
	C (name)	1	
	B (name)	2	
	L (name)	4	
	Today	1	
	Friend	1	6/10 = 60%
Pronoun	This	2	
	I	2	
	We	1	
	Your	1	
	You	1	5/7 = 71.4%
Verb	Shall	1	
	Can	2	
	Have	1	
	I'm	1	
	Making	1	
	Play	1	
	That's	3	
	Look	3	
	There's	2	
	Be	1	
	Like	1	11/17 = 64.7%
Adverb	Now	2	1 / 2 = 50%
Adjective	Wibbly	1	
	Wobbly	1	
	Right	1	
	Best	1	
	Enough	2	5/6 = 83.3%
Exclamation	Hey	1	1/1 = 100%
Preposition	At	2	1 / 2 = 50%
Connective	If	1	1 / 1 = 100%
Determiner	Another	2	
	A	2	2/4 = 50%

**Overall TTR: 33/50 = 66% lexical diversity**

TTR calculation: number of different words/number of utterances.  
Higher percentage = higher quality.



Lexical Analysis for setting 2, visit 2, child 6 – natural environment

Word type	Word spoken	No of times	TTR calculation
Noun	Hands	3	
	Way	1	
	M(name)	1	3/5 = 60%
Pronoun	I	7	
	Our	3	2/10 = 20%
Verb	Let's	2	
	leave	3	
	Don't	2	
	Fell	1	
	Went	1	
	Didn't	1	
	Know	2	
	Rolled	1	
	Watch	1	
	Remember	1	
	Jump	1	
	Jumped	1	12/17 = 70.6%
Adjective	Ooollooop	1	1/1 = 100%
Adverb	Down	5	
	There	1	
	How	1	3/7 = 42.9%
Preposition	Over	1	1/1 = 100%
Exclamation	No	1	
	Oh	1	
	Charge	1	
	Yeah	1	4/4 = 100%
Determiner	The	2	
	All	1	
	This	2	3/5 = 60%

**Overall TTR: 29/50 = 58% lexical diversity**

TTR calculation: number of different words/number of utterances.  
Higher percentage = higher quality.

Lexical Analysis for setting 2, visit 3, child 8 – outdoor classroom

Word type	Word spoken	No of times	TTR calculation
Noun	One	6	
	two	4	
	three	4	
	Four	2	
	Five	1	
	Six	1	
	Seven	1	
	Eight	1	
	Nine	1	
	ten	1	
	Eleven	1	
	Twelve	1	
	thirteen	1	
	Sixteen	1	
	hundred	1	
	O'clock	2	
	Time	1	
	Wolf	1	
	Mr	1	
	Clock	1	
	Turn	1	$21/34 = 61.8\%$
Pronoun	I	1	$1/1 = 100\%$
Verb	What's	1	
	Stop	3	
	Want	1	
	It's	1	$4/6 = 66.7\%$
Adverb	Right	2	
	There	2	$2/4 = 50\%$
Exclamation	No	1	$1/1 = 100\%$
Determiner	The	1	
	A	3	$2/4 = 50\%$

**Overall TTR:  $31/50 = 62\%$  lexical diversity**

TTR calculation: number of different words/number of utterances.  
Higher percentage = higher quality.

Word type	Word spoken	No of times	TTR calculation
Noun	J (name)	1	
	Panto	1	
	Birthday	6	
	Baby	4	
	Some	2	$5/14 = 35.7\%$
Pronoun	You	3	
	That	1	
	Mine	1	
	Your	1	
	We	1	
	Me	1	
	Yours	1	$7/9 = 77.8\%$
	Stay	1	
	Have	1	
Verb	Are	1	
	Having	1	
	Its	1	
	Sing	1	$6/6 = 100\%$
	As	1	
	Well	1	
Adverb	Now	1	$3/3 = 100\%$
	No	1	$1/1 = 100\%$
	And	1	$1/1 = 100\%$
Determiner	A	1	$1/1 = 100\%$
Adjective	Happy	5	
	Little	1	
	After	1	$3/7 = 42.9\%$
Preposition	To	6	
	For	2	$2/8 = 25\%$

**Overall TTR:  $29/50 = 58\%$  lexical diversity**

TTR calculation: number of different words/number of utterances.  
Higher percentage = higher quality.

Lexical Analysis for setting 3, visit 2, child 11 – indoor classroom

Word type	Word spoken	No of times	TTR calculation
Noun	Friend	2	
	Door	1	
	N (name)	7	
	O (name)	1	
	Day	2	
	Somebody	1	
	Nobody's	1	7/15 = 46.7%
Pronoun	Me	1	
	I	1	
	Who	1	
	You	2	
	Mine	1	5/6 = 83.3%
Verb	Don't	1	
	Know	1	
	Building	1	
	Help	1	
	Have	1	
	Had	1	
	Are	1	
	Having	1	
	Is	1	
	It's	1	
	You're	1	11/11 = 100%
Adjective	Nice	2	1/2 = 50%
Adverb	Ever	1	
	Again	1	2/2 = 100%
Exclamation	Ow	2	
	Yes	3	
	Hello	1	3/6 = 50%
Determiner	A	2	
	The	1	
	It	1	3/4 = 75%
Connective	And	2	1/2 = 50%
Preposition	At	1	1/1 = 100%

**Overall TTR: 34/50 = 68% lexical diversity**

TTR calculation: number of different words/number of utterances.  
Higher percentage = higher quality.

Lexical Analysis for setting 4, visit 1, child 4 – forest environment

Word type	Word spoken	No of times	TTR calculation
Noun	Plan	1	
	Story(ies)	2	
	Monster	1	
	Colour	1	$4/5 = 80\%$
Pronoun	You	1	
	This	1	$2/2 = 100\%$
Verb	We're	2	
	making	2	
	be	1	
	Lying	1	
	It's	1	
	Let's	3	
	Act	1	
	Come	1	
	Do	2	
	Would	1	
	Like	1	
	Pull	1	$12/17 = 70.6\%$
Adjective	Cheeky	1	
	Scary	2	
	Purple	2	
	Little	1	$4/6 = 66.7\%$
Adverb	Now	3	
	Like	2	$2/5 = 40\%$
Preposition	On	1	$1/1 = 100\%$
Determiner	It	2	
	A	3	
	What	1	$3/6 = 50\%$
Exclamation	Yes	2	
	For	1	
	Well	1	$3/4 = 75\%$
Connective	To	1	
	And	3	$2/4 = 50\%$

**Overall TTR:  $33/50 = 66\%$  lexical diversity**

TTR calculation: number of different words/number of utterances.  
Higher percentage = higher quality.

Lexical Analysis for setting 4, visit 2, child 3 – outdoor classroom

Word type	Word spoken	No of times	TTR calculation
Noun	J (name)	3	
	pirate	1	
	ship	1	
	Waterfall	1	
	Water	2	
	birthday	1	6/9 = 66.7%
Pronoun	You	1	
	Who	3	
	This	1	
	We	2	4/7 = 57.1%
Verb	Do	2	
	won't	1	
	Think	1	
	Got	1	
	Gets	2	
	Coming	1	
	Can	1	
	Be	1	
	Shall	1	
	There's	1	
	Will	1	
	Go	1	12/14 = 85.7%
	Why	2	
	Too	1	
Adverb	Through	1	3/ 4 = 75%
	On	1	
Preposition	With	1	2/2 = 100%
	It	3	
Determiner	The	2	
	That	2	
	A	1	
	What	1	5/9 = 55.6%
Adjective	High	1	
	Just	1	2/2 = 100%
Exclamation	Hello	1	1/1 = 100%
Connective	If	1	
	Because	1	2/2 = 100%

**Overall TTR: 37/50 = 74% lexical diversity**

TTR calculation: number of different words/number of utterances.  
Higher percentage = higher quality.

Lexical Analysis for setting 4, visit 3, child 7 – indoor classroom

Word type	Word spoken	No of times	TTR calculation
Noun	L (name)	1	
	One	1	$2/2 = 100\%$
Pronoun	We	1	
	She	2	$2/3 = 66.7\%$
Verb	It's	5	
	Skip	4	
	Stuck	1	
	Raining	1	
	Been	1	
	Look	2	
	I'm	1	
	making	1	
	Come	1	
	Let's	1	
	Go	2	
	Shall	1	
	Find	2	
	Is	3	$14/26 = 53.8\%$
Adverb	really	2	
	Now	2	
	Where	2	
	There	1	
	Out	1	
	On	1	$6/9 = 66.7\%$
Adjective	Hard	3	
	Big	1	$2/4 = 50\%$
Determiner	A	1	$1/1 = 100\%$
Connective	And	2	$1/2 = 50\%$
Exclamation	Yeah	1	
	No	1	
	Oh	1	$3/3 = 100\%$

**Overall TTR:  $31/50 = 62\%$  lexical diversity**

TTR calculation: number of different words/number of utterances.  
Higher percentage = higher quality.

## **Appendix Fifteen**

### **Field notes from visit one to setting one within phase three.**

**Visit date:** 10<sup>th</sup> July 2018

**Arrival time:** 9.15am

**Departure time:** 2.15pm

**Weather:** The weather started off fairly cloudy but still fairly warm with no need for coats. There had been no rain fall for over 30 days so everywhere was extremely dry and dusty. Wellington boots were not required. Although it remained overcast throughout the day the temperature rose to around 23 degrees.

**Overall group size:** 13

**Sample size:** 11

**Adults:** 5 including me (1 deputy manager, 3 practitioners at level 3 and me.)

**Notes:** The children had all been told that I was attending and that they were going to be wearing cameras. The children were very keen to take part and all asked for their cameras as soon as I arrived. I explained to them what I was doing and told them that I wouldn't name them and tell anyone what they said while they were playing although if I heard them say something that could put them in danger then I would have to tell someone.

All children's parents had given permission to partake although in the end only 11 of those children who had permission were happy to take part. They put on the chest straps happily, helped by myself. The cameras were not switched on at this point but were attached to allow time for habituation.

The children had a short walk to the forest school site, leaving at 9.30am and the cameras were switched on when they arrived at the site.

Throughout the whole morning session children were within the forest school environment and the cameras were left on until around 11am (they were switched off to preserve the battery for later on in the day). Whilst in the forest school site they were able to play on mud hills, sliding and climbing as they wished. They also had access to some precision tools to allow digging and excavation as children were showing a keen interest in dinosaurs. They had no other resources available to them and engaged in imaginary play throughout the session

At around 12 the children made the short walk back to the setting and had their dinner. After dinner they were keen to put on cameras again as they played freely within the indoor environment. Cameras were left on until the batteries ran out and this captured around 45 mins of their indoor playtime. Whilst inside they had access to the book corner, play-dough, small animal play, role-play kitchen area, jumping and balancing area and a mark making table.

On departure I explained to the children that I would be returning the following week and they all expressed a desire to wear cameras again.

### **Field notes from visit two to setting one within phase three.**

**Visit date:** 17<sup>th</sup> July 2018

**Arrival time:** 9.15am

**Departure time:** 12.05pm



**Weather:** The weather still continued to be very warm and, as reported the week before there still had been no rain fall so everywhere remained extremely dry and dusty. Wellington boots were not required. The temperature rose to around 23 degrees.

**Overall group size:** 13

**Sample size:** 11

**Adults:** 5 including myself and research assistant (3 practitioners at level 3, myself and the research assistant)

**Notes:** The children had been asking that morning “is the lady with the cameras coming today?” and were very excited to wear them again. I reminded them that I wouldn’t name them and tell anyone what they said while they were playing although if I heard them say something that could put them in danger then I would have to tell someone.

11 children took part. They put on the chest straps happily, helped by myself. The cameras were not switched on at this point but were attached to allow time for habituation.

This session the children were not going off site to the forest school as the forest school leader was not feeling well and did not want to go too far away. The setting has what they call a “wildlife garden” that is also a forest school site within their grounds so on this occasion they visited that space. It is equipped with a fire circle, trees to climb on and large wooden loose parts to encourage physical development. There are also a couple of den areas where children can go and hide and climb. The excavation theme from last week was still prevalent so resources for digging and excavating were provided again which the children used freely. They had snack of crackers and bananas whilst in this environment.

The children were within this forest school environment and the cameras were left on until around 11am (they were switched off to preserve the battery for later on in the day). At just before 11am they went back into the their outdoor classroom, still with the cameras on and had free-play until lunch.

Within the outdoor classroom the children had access to excavation activities (large rocks with tools to allow them to chisel parts away), a kitchen area, a book corner and quiet space and mark making areas. There were also a great deal of loose parts which were open ended and children could access freely. At just before midday children were invited into the book corner for a circle time activity to prepare for lunch. The cameras were removed at this time. The outdoor classroom, compared to the wildlife garden, was much smaller and it was noted that adults were more engaged with the children’s play in the outdoor classroom that they were in the wildlife garden. The wildlife garden allowed children to go off freely and play independently whereas the outdoor classroom appeared much more structured and adult led.

On departure I explained to the children that I would be returning the following week and they all expressed a desire to wear cameras again.

**TQAF administration** – This week was the one which the research assistant attended and completed the TQAF alongside me. We completed them independently and compared and discussed after completion. Results for the forest school and the outdoor classroom were extremely similar however the assistant found it very difficult to rate the indoor environment. At the time of assessing the indoor environment there were no children in it and section 3 in particular was impossible to assess without seeing how children were interacting with the environment and how it was used. The scale was therefore completed by the assistant just on what she could see at that time and this was noted. I was able to complete the indoor assessment fully as I had seen it

in use the week before and could apply prior knowledge of how this room was used by children. This is therefore a point to note for future TQAF use.

**Field notes from visit three to setting one within phase three.**

**Visit date:** 24<sup>th</sup> July 2018

**Arrival time:** 9.15am

**Departure time:** 11.55am

**Weather:** The weather still continued to be very warm and, as reported the previous weeks there still had been no rain fall so everywhere remained extremely dry and dusty. There was a heatwave and for days the temperatures had soared beyond average. The temperature on this day rose to around 29 degrees.

**Overall group size:** 11

**Sample size:** 10

**Adults:** 3 including myself (2 practitioners at level 3 and myself)

**Notes:** The children greeted me this morning with “Tanya’s here!!!! Have you bought your cameras??” They were all very excited to wear them again. I reminded them that I wouldn’t name them and tell anyone what they said while they were playing although if I heard them say something that could put them in danger then I would have to tell someone.

10 children took part as one child had not been given parental permission. They put on the chest straps happily, helped by myself. The cameras were switched on immediately. The child who had not got permission asked to wear a camera so he was given one but the data was deleted immediately and not included in the research. The weather this week had been particularly hot and humid (as mentioned above) and the government had issued an amber warning to keep vulnerable people out of the sun for prolonged periods of this. As a result the children were not going off site to the forest school. Although the forest was shaded and cool it involved a fair walk there and back and it was felt that this would mean that the children were exposed to the sun for too long. Instead then the children accessed the “wildlife garden”, that is also a forest school site within their grounds. It is equipped with a fire circle, trees to climb on and large wooden loose parts to encourage physical development. There are also a couple of den areas where children can go and hide and climb. There was also water play and children were able to get wet if they wanted and play with the hose. If they engaged in this play they had to remove the cameras as the waterproof cases were not fitted due to blocking the microphones. The children only played in the wildlife garden for around an hour and then they went back to their outdoor classroom for around half an hour. The outdoor classroom can also become very hot due to its’ perspex roof so at around 11.20am the children went inside where it was slightly cooler. All of the children were inside at once and this made it extremely loud. It was also school holiday time and some older children were also present for holiday club. It appeared much more chaotic than usual and children and staff were struggling with the effects of the heat.

The cameras were left on for the duration of my visit.

## **Appendix Sixteen**

### **Field notes from visit one to setting two within phase three.**

**Visit date:** 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018

**Arrival time:** 9am

**Departure time:** 2pm

**Weather:** It had been raining heavily all night and throughout the early morning of this day although as we left the setting to go to forest school the rain stopped. No more rain fell that day but the ground was extremely wet. The temperature was around 15 degrees.

**Overall group size:** 20

**Sample size:** 9

**Adults:** 4 including me (1 forest school leader, 1 forest school trained practitioner, 1 practitioner at level 3 and me.)

**Notes:** The children were getting ready when I arrived at the setting and putting on waterproof suits and wellington boots. When ready they all sat down and I told them about my research and explained that some of them were to be wearing cameras throughout the day. The children were very excited to take part. I told them that I wouldn't name them and tell anyone what they said while they were playing although if I heard them say something that could put them in danger then I would have to tell someone. They told me about the fire circle and that there were rules around the fire circle as that was dangerous.

12 children's parents had given permission to partake although only 8 of those 12 were present on this morning. All children who had permission were extremely happy to take part and put on the chest straps happily, helped by myself and two practitioners. The cameras were not switched on at this point but were attached to allow time for habituation. One child whose parent had not got around to returning a permission slip became very distressed as he was not given a camera. I therefore gave him a camera, mounted on a chest strap as with the others, and made a note not to include this data within the study but to delete the recordings immediately on return. On return however the practitioners stated that the parent would be extremely happy for this to be included in the study as the child had had issues with speech and language and they asked the parent to sign the permission form retrospectively. The data was therefore not deleted and was included in the project.

The forest school site is a short walk from the setting and the site is then accessed via a farm track. When the site was reached the cameras were then switched on and children went off to play. They did not seem to be restricted by the cameras and did not appear to even be aware of their presence. The rain had caused the site to be quite wet and a group of children spent a great deal of time playing on a small mound of mud where they were jumping in muddy puddle, digging, burying their feet in the mud....they added more water to the mound from a water butt and were making waterfalls.

Other activities that children were engaging in were potion making, climbing on tyres, drawing, and running round and round in a maze playing "big bad wolf" imaginary games. The site has a fire circle, surrounded by logs and some children sat around and watched the fire as the forest school leader set a fire to cook lunch on (beans and hot dogs) and snack (hot chocolate with marshmallows and brioche). Children all came together for snack and lunch.

Cameras were switched off after around 45 minutes of free play within the forest school and harnesses were removed. They were then reattached when the children returned to the indoor nursery setting at around 12.45pm. Children returned to free-play until 1.30pm when a music teacher visited the setting to lead a music session. The music session was going on down one end of the room with another group of children whilst the participants were engaged in free-play. They had block play, cars, home corner, book corner and play-do activities out in the free-play area. The area was quite small as the music session was going on and there was an area set aside for sleep. The cameras recorded this free play session. One child asked to have his camera removed as he “didn’t want it on anymore” and this request was immediately responded to.

It was noted that the indoor environment was contained and as such the adults were in close proximity to the children and engaged more with them than when in the natural environment. The forest school was a large open space and children were free to roam without adults alongside them so were more likely in this environment to be playing without an adult nearby.

Children were thanked for their help and I promised to return in a couple of weeks with the cameras again. Some children asked if they could have a turn so I need to ensure that when returning I have a few spare cameras that are given but not included for the research data.

### **Field notes from visit two to setting two within phase three.**

**Visit date:** 21<sup>st</sup> June 2018

**Arrival time:** 11am

**Departure time:** 3.15pm

**Weather:** It was a really warm day with the sun shining and temperatures of around 22 degrees. There was a light wind.

**Overall group size:** 36 at secret garden, 17 at forest school

**Sample size:** 9

**Adults:** At the secret garden there were 7 staff including me (1 deputy manager, 1 room supervisor, 4 practitioners at level 3 and me) and at forest school there were 4 staff (1 forest school leader, 1 deputy manager, 1 practitioner at level 3 and me.)

**Notes:** When I arrived the children were already playing in the secret garden. All of the children who had previously participated in this phase of research were present and eagerly approached me to have cameras fitted as they remembered from last time. I reminded them that I wouldn’t name them and tell anyone what they said while they were playing although if I heard them say something that could put them in danger then I would have to tell someone. I had some spare cameras with me although nobody asked to use them so they were not needed.

All 9 children were happy to take part and put on the chest straps happily, helped by myself and a practitioner. The cameras were switched on at this point and children went off to play after being reminded not to touch the buttons.

The secret garden had a mud kitchen, tyres, ropes, drawing activities and hidden areas in the trees. They played in the secret garden for around 45 minutes and then returned to the setting, which is short walk across a car park, for their dinner. Cameras were removed at this point and then put back on again when children were getting ready for forest school after lunch. The forest school site is a 15 minute walk from the setting and the site is then accessed via a farm track. When the site was reached the cameras

were then switched on and children went off to play. They did not seem to be restricted by the cameras and did not appear to even be aware of their presence. Activities at forest school that children were engaging in were mark making and tying ropes and sticks, climbing on tyres and running round and round in a maze playing “big bad wolf” imaginary games. The site has a fire circle, surrounded by logs and the session included a snack time (hot chocolate made on the camp fire and brioche) and the fire was also used to cook tea on (tomato soup). Children all came together for snack and lunch.

Cameras were switched off after around an hour of free play within the forest school and harnesses were removed. I then left after thanking the children and staff for their help and saying goodbye.

**TQAF administration:** This week was when the TQAF was applied as the third and final week within this setting I will not be present at (see field notes for visit three). This setting was not willing for the research assistant to attend (due to there being a conflict of interests) and the TQAF was therefore administered by myself in discussion with the deputy manager. A comprehensive discussion was held and a consensus reached. The deputy manager’s bias was acknowledged and through discussion the aim was to minimise this bias and assess the environment objectively. This was achieved.

### **Field notes from visit three to setting two within phase three.**

**Visit date:** 11<sup>th</sup> July 2018

**Arrival time:** 11am

**Departure time:** 3.15pm

**Weather:** It was a really warm day with the sun shining and temperatures of around 25 degrees. There was a light wind.

**Overall group size:** 30 at secret garden and in indoor classroom

**Sample size:** 5

**Adults:** Within both environments there were 7 staff.

**Notes:** I was unable to attend on this day due to a clash in dates meaning a last minute change in the data capturing. As it was essential that the same children were included in the sample as had previously been used, and a lot of them were due to leave the setting soon to go to school, the setting offered to undertake the data capturing without me being present. I therefore ensured that the cameras were empty and delivered all of the necessary equipment to them the day before required, along with written instructions on how to operate the cameras and who had previously been included in the sample. I also set out which number camera they were given and asked them to follow the same pattern so that I was able to track individuals as well as the cohort should it be required.

When I collected the cameras at the end of the day the deputy manager said that all had gone well and the children had been quite happy with wearing the devices. She said that quite a few of the children were away on holiday so the sample size was reduced to 5. She informed me that they had been in the secret garden and then in the indoor classroom and that she had recorded within both of those environments. She said that the session had been quite “normal” and there was nothing out of the ordinary that had happened, or had been provided for the children, so the data should be comparable to previous visits.

When accessing the recordings, it was discovered that 7 out of the 10 recordings (5 children in 2 environments should have given 10 recordings) were unsuccessful for

various reasons and very little data was therefore captured. I still transcribed and analysed what was available however as I felt it to be unethical to collect data and then not use it. This issue will be discussed further in the discussion chapter.

## **Appendix Seventeen**

### **Field notes from visit one to setting three within phase three.**

**Visit date:** 18<sup>th</sup> June 2018

**Arrival time:** 8.30am

**Departure time:** 12.05pm

**Weather:** The weather was lovely on this day, fairly warm early on in the day and then as the sun came out and the temperature increased then children were encouraged to put on hats as the warmth from the sun came through. The temperature rose to around 22 degrees.

**Overall group size:** 25

**Sample size:** 9

**Adults:** 4 including me (1 deputy manager, 2 practitioners at level 3 and me.)

**Notes:** The children went to “carpet time” at just after 9am. They all sat down and I told them about my research and explained that some of them were to be wearing cameras throughout the day. The children were very keen to take part. I told them that I wouldn’t name them and tell anyone what they said while they were playing although if I heard them say something that could put them in danger then I would have to tell someone.

10 children’s parents had given permission to partake although only 9 of those children who had permission were happy to take part. They put on the chest straps happily, helped by myself. The cameras were not switched on at this point but were attached to allow time for habituation. The cameras were then switched on after around 10 minutes.

Throughout the whole morning session children were free to move from indoors to outdoors freely and most of their time was free-play opportunities. The deputy manager was asking some children, in turn, to go inside and draw a picture that he could send to their new school and to tell him about what they thought about going to school. The cameras were left on constantly.

Children did not access the forest school site on this visit due to staff shortages however the outdoor environment is very natural in the way that it is set up so children had access to the natural resources within the outdoor classroom environment.

Free-play opportunities were plentiful throughout the morning. Inside was a drawing table, block play, play dough with sensory items to add to it if wished, book corner, climbing frame, dinosaurs and loose parts. Outside had a mud kitchen, sand pit, water play, tyres and ladders, trees to climb, rope swings, dressing up area, cardboard boxes, stone area. Rolling snack was provided on a picnic bench outside and two children were responsible for helping to serve and pour drinks.

Cameras were left on for the duration of the morning session and were switched off when children returned to carpet time again at around 11.30am.

### **Field notes from visit two to setting three within phase three.**

**Visit date:** 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2018

**Arrival time:** 8.30am

**Departure time:** 11.45am

**Weather:** The weather was lovely on this day, fairly warm early on in the day and then as the sun came out and the temperature increased then children were encouraged to put on hats as the warmth from the sun came through. The temperature rose to around 22 degrees.

**Overall group size:** 25

**Sample size:** 10

**Adults:** 4 including me and research assistant (1 deputy manager, 1 practitioners at level 3, myself and my research assistant.)

**Notes:** The children went to “carpet time” at just after 9am. They all sat down and I told them about my research and explained that some of them were to be wearing cameras throughout the day. The children were very keen to take part. I told them that I wouldn’t name them and tell anyone what they said while they were playing although if I heard them say something that could put them in danger then I would have to tell someone.

10 children’s parents had given permission to partake and all of those children who had permission were happy to take part. They put on the chest straps happily, helped by myself. The cameras were not switched on at this point but were attached to allow time for habituation. The cameras were then switched on after around 10 minutes. Throughout the whole morning session children were free to move from indoors to outdoors freely and most of their time was free-play opportunities. There was no structured play throughout the morning with children left to lead their own play. The cameras were left on constantly.

Children did not access the forest school site on this visit due to staff shortages however the outdoor environment is very natural in the way that it is set up so children had access to the natural resources within the outdoor classroom environment.

Free-play opportunities were plentiful throughout the morning. Inside was a drawing table, block play, food mixing activity, book corner, climbing frame, dinosaurs and loose parts. Outside had a mud kitchen, sand pit, water play, tyres and ladders, trees to climb, rope swings, dressing up area, cardboard boxes, stone area. The children had been playing with rope and tying knots throughout the week and that play continued throughout this morning. All children were given snack at once, sitting on the floor in the outside space.

Cameras were left on for the duration of the morning session and were switched off when children returned to carpet time again at around 11.30am.

**TQAF administration:** This session was the one where my research assistant attended with me and the TQAF was administered. Her and I went off separately and administered the framework independently and then discussed at the end of the session. In discussion it was necessary to remind ourselves that the framework was rating the environment only as discussions could veer towards elements of practice rather than specifically on the environment. It was also noted that the framework was purely a snapshot at the time that it was assessed – an example of this was element 3.1: Acoustics. When I rated this element within the indoor environment I had observed this to be managed well and gave the maximum score as throughout my visits I had observed this to be so. Towards the end of the session however I was aware that a CD had been put on with background music and as a result the overall



noise level increased significantly and this would therefore have been scored differently if I had completed the TQAF after this observation. This session was the second one of attending this setting. It should have been the third and final visit (hence arranging for my research assistant to attend with me) however due to staff illness and absence the setting had rearranged the visits. My research assistant was not able to rearrange her visit. A reflection on this process here then is that I have been able to complete the TQAF based on the knowledge of the setting that I have accumulated throughout my visits whereas my research assistant is applying purely what is seen on the day of TQAF administration.

**Field notes from visit three to setting three within phase three.**

**Visit date:** Planned for 19<sup>th</sup> July 2018

This visit did not go ahead.

The last two visits had had their forest school trips cancelled due to staff shortages and the recordings had therefore captured the indoor and outdoor classroom. This third visit really needed to capture the natural environment and I was informed that this would not be happening on this day either for the same reasons. I tried to rearrange however this was not possible as the children concerned will have left the setting to go to school.

I therefore politely informed the setting that another visit would not be needed as this would not provide the data that was required.

At this setting it was therefore only possible to complete the TQAF for, and capture speech recordings for the indoor and outdoor classroom environments.

## **Appendix Eighteen**

### **Field notes from visit one to setting four within phase three.**

**Visit date:** 6<sup>th</sup> September 2018

**Arrival time:** 9.15am

**Departure time:** 2.10pm

**Weather:** The weather was fine and fairly warm with no need for coats. The ground was dry and the sun came through on occasions, although it wasn't hot. The temperature was around 19 degrees.

**Overall group size:** 13

**Sample size:** 7

**Adults:** 4 including me (1 forest school leader, 2 practitioners at level 3 and me.)

**Notes:** The children had all been told that I was attending and that they were going to be wearing cameras

12 of the 13 children's parents had given permission to partake although in the end only 7 of those children who had permission were happy to take part.

The children had a short mini-bus ride to the forest school site, leaving at 9.30am. On arrival they then had a short walk to the site and they sat around the fire circle to talk about rules and what was going to happen at forest school. It was while they were around the fire circle that I explained to them what I was doing and told them that I wouldn't name them and tell anyone what they said while they were playing although if I heard them say something that could put them in danger then I would have to tell someone.

Those that wanted to then put on the chest straps happily, helped by myself. The cameras were not switched on at this point but were attached to allow time for habituation. They went off and explored the site and began playing and the cameras were switched on after around 10 minutes.

Throughout the whole morning session children were within the forest school environment and the cameras were left on until around 11am (they were switched off to preserve the battery for later on in the day). Whilst in the forest school site they were able to play on a hammock, a rope ladder, a balancing trap that was strung between two trees and in a den. There were also crates around the site with craft and drawing materials, streamers, mud kitchen accessories and books. A tarpaulin was laid out on the floor for those who wanted to sit and do activities. Whilst in the forest school the practitioners spent most of their time around the fire circle, preparing the food together and organising the care elements of the session (ie toileting, snacks etc). As a result the majority of the forest school session was very child led.

At around 12 the children made the short journey back to the setting and had their dinner. After dinner they were keen to put on cameras again as they played freely within the outdoor and indoor environment, which they were able to flow freely between. Hardly anyone played indoors though and most spent all of the time outdoors. Cameras were left on until the batteries ran out and this captured around 45 mins of their playtime. Quite a few children asked for their cameras to be removed whilst playing in the outdoor environment – which of course was respected. Whilst outside they had access to water play, mud kitchen, sand pit, cosy book corner area, salt in a tough spot with pipes and tubes etc. Whilst inside they had access to the book corner, play-dough, small animal play, role-play kitchen area, jumping and

balancing area and a mark making table. Practitioners spread themselves around the setting and engaged with children as required/requested.

One point to note about this week at this setting was that it was the first week back after the summer break for a lot of children and for some this was the first time that they had ever attended forest school. Saying that there were no tears and all of the children appeared content and engaged in their play. If I had not been told this was their first week I would not have known.

On departure I explained to the children that I would be returning the following week and they all expressed a desire to wear cameras again.

### **Field notes from visit two to setting four within phase three.**

**Visit date:** 13<sup>th</sup> September 2018

**Arrival time:** 9.15am

**Departure time:** 2.00pm

**Weather:** The weather was fine but an autumn chill was in the air and there was a need for coats. The ground was dry and the sun came through on occasions, although it wasn't hot. The temperature was around 17 degrees.

**Overall group size:** 12

**Sample size:** 7

**Adults:** 4 including me (1 forest school leader, 2 practitioners at level 3 and me.)

**Notes:** The children had all been told that I was attending and that they were going to be wearing cameras

12 of the 13 children's parents had given permission to partake although in the end only 7 of those children who had permission were happy to take part. Children were not overly keen on having cameras and I happily followed their lead and only provided them when they asked. One member of staff suggested that we give stickers or rewards for those who wore the cameras to encourage them, however I quickly explained that this was not ethical and I wanted children to feel completely at ease and only to take part should they feel happy to.

The children had a short mini-bus to the forest school site, leaving at 9.30am. On arrival they then had a short walk to the site and they sat around the fire circle to talk about rules and what was going to happen at forest school. It was while they were around the fire circle that I reminded them what I was doing and reminded them that I wouldn't name them and tell anyone what they said while they were playing although if I heard them say something that could put them in danger then I would have to tell someone.

Those that wanted to then put on the chest straps happily, helped by myself. The cameras were then switched on.

Throughout the whole morning session children were within the forest school environment and the cameras were left on until around 11am (they were switched off to preserve the battery for later on in the day). Whilst in the forest school site they were able to play on a hammock, a rope ladder, a balancing trap that was strung between two trees and in a den. There were also crates around the site with craft and drawing materials, streamers, mud kitchen accessories and books. A tarpaulin was laid out on the floor for those who wanted to sit and do activities.

At around 12 the children made the short journey back to the setting and had their dinner. After dinner some were keen to put on cameras again as they played freely within the outdoor and indoor environment, which they were able to flow freely between. Hardly anyone played indoors though and most spent all of the time outdoors. Cameras were left on until the batteries ran out and this captured around 45 mins of their playtime. Quite a few children asked for their cameras to be removed whilst playing in the outdoor environment – which of course was respected. Whilst outside they had access to water play, mud kitchen, sand pit, cosy book corner area. Whilst inside they had access to the book corner, play-dough, small animal play, role-play kitchen area, jumping and balancing area and a mark making table. On departure I explained to the children that I would be returning the following week and they all expressed a desire to wear cameras again.

### **Field notes from visit three to setting four within phase three.**

**Visit date:** 20<sup>th</sup> September 2018

**Arrival time:** 11.15am

**Departure time:** 2.05pm

**Weather:** It was extremely wet with persistent heavy rain. It had been raining since sunrise and the ground was very wet with puddles around. It was cool and there was a need for coats and full waterproof suits when going to forest school. The temperature was around 14 degrees.

**Overall group size:** 11

**Sample size:** 5

**Adults:** 5 including me (1 forest school leader, 2 practitioners at level 3, my research assistant and me.)

**Notes:** The heavy rain this week meant that no recordings were possible within the forest school environment. My research assistant (KH) and myself arrived at forest school whilst the children were around the fire circle just finishing their snack. We did not record but KH and myself administered the TQAF while the children played. (see further notes below re TQAF). The children were happy to see us and remembered me by name and invited me to join in with their play (jumping in puddles and playing hide and seek) which I did willingly.

The children left the forest school site at around midday and rode the short minibus journey back to the setting for dinner. At around 1pm KH and I went to the nursery (after they had had dinner) and offered the cameras to those who had got permission to partake. 10 of the 11 children's parents had given permission to partake although in the end only 5 of those children who had permission were happy to take part.

Children were not overly keen on having cameras and I happily followed their lead and only provided them when they asked. Those that wanted to then put on the chest straps happily, helped by myself. The cameras were then switched on.

Children played freely within the outdoor and indoor environment, which they were able to flow freely between. The rain was persistent throughout the day. This week the children were spread between both environments. Some children asked for their cameras to be removed whilst playing– which of course was respected. Whilst outside they had access to water play, mud kitchen, sand pit, cosy book corner area. Whilst inside they had access to the book corner, play-dough, jumping and balancing area and a mark making table.

On departure I said goodbye to the children and thanked them for my help with my research.

**TQAF administration** – This week was the one which the research assistant attended and completed the TQAF alongside me. We completed them independently and compared and discussed after completion. We had very similar results with the forest school for both of us gaining the highest score. One difference that was noticeable however was KH scored both the indoor and outdoor environment at 3.2, where I scored indoors at 3.2 and outdoors at 3.4. On discussion it was evident that I had applied prior knowledge, through observations over my period of attendance at the setting and conversation with the staff, whereas KH had undertaken the TQAF based on a snapshot of her one visit.

## Appendix Nineteen

SWOT analysis: Should phase one and phase three participant settings be the same?

<p><u>STRENGTHS</u></p> <p>Will be slightly known by setting/children at phase three and observations could therefore be more naturalistic.</p> <p>Difficulty of sourcing participants will not be repeated at phase three.</p> <p>Context of setting known before first audio observations undertaken which will assist with field notes.</p> <p>Quality rating scale (phase two) will be implemented in a setting that contributed to the data for this – this will be a benefit to the setting to see the whole process through.</p>	<p><u>WEAKNESSES</u></p> <p>Familiarity could mean that I, as researcher, go into phase three with pre-conceived ideas.</p> <p>The quality rating scale will be implemented in a setting that contributed to the data for this – this could impact on the outcomes of the application of this scale. Saying that however as the data came from many sources this impact is likely to be diluted somewhat.</p>
<p><u>OPPORTUNITIES</u></p> <p>Having received ethical permissions from the settings already this gives the opportunity for phase three to continue with little extra paperwork.</p> <p>The settings identified already meet the research criteria so are able to participate in phase three.</p>	<p><u>THREATS</u></p> <p>Management of setting could change and they could withdraw from research process.</p> <p>Setting could close – phase one and phase three are likely to have a gap in timing of around a year – practice could change in that time period.</p>

As a result of this analysis it was decided to use the same settings for phase one and phase three of the research. The strengths outweighed the weaknesses and it is argued that, by being aware of these weaknesses, that the research can be mindful and ethical.

## Appendix Twenty



Dear parents

Firstly let me introduce myself – my name is Tanya Richardson and I am currently a university student with the University of Northampton. I am in the process of completing a PhD in Education.

My research aim is to investigate whether the environment has a difference to how children speak, with objectives of:

- Analysing the utterances that children make in an indoors situation, in a playground environment and in a forest school environment
- Establishing which environment provides richer speech and language
- Hypothesising on why one environment may provide richer speech and language than others

In brief, I am researching whether the quality of different play/learning environments has an impact on the quality of young children's speech and language development. I have already collected people's views and opinions on what a quality environment is and what I need to do now is to record children's speech and then analyse that speech to see if there is a difference in the way that they speak depending on where they are playing. The way I intend to capture this information is by attaching go-pro type cameras by way of a clip and then just allowing the children to go about their normal day.

I would like to assure you that your child will not be named at any time within my research, anonymity will be maintained at all times and although my work will be seen by the University of Northampton, it will be totally confidential and nothing will divulge your child's identity or the setting's identity at any time.

Any data that is collected will be stored securely on the University's server. I would also like to reassure you that this will be carried out in a considerate manner to the children, and I will check with them that they are happy to be included. I have produced a leaflet for your child to bring home and to look at with you, to give them an idea of what I am doing.

Should you wish to withdraw your child from the research at any point before the end of October 2018, when the data will have been analysed, that will be quite acceptable.

When the research has been undertaken it will form part of a thesis which may in the future be published or presented in public forums. This research may also be used by other academics in future work. Any identifying features will be removed though so it is not possible to identify any participant.

I would like to thank you, in advance for assisting me with this – once my research has been completed I will happily share my results with you, should you be interested. Please sign the slip attached to confirm receipt of this letter and to confirm that you are happy for your child to be included in the research. If you have any questions on any aspect of this then please feel free to contact me at [tanya.richardson@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:tanya.richardson@northampton.ac.uk).

Kindest Regards

Tanya Richardson

I am happy for my child to be included in the research detailed above that is being undertaken by  
Tanya Richardson

.....Signed

.....Print name

.....Date

I would like to see the results of this research      Yes/No (delete as appropriate)



## Appendix Twenty-One



Dear parents

Firstly let me introduce myself – my name is Tanya Richardson and I am currently a university student with the University of Northampton. I am in the process of completing a PhD in Education.

My research aim is to investigate whether the environment has a difference to how children speak, with objectives of:

- Analysing the utterances that children make in an indoors situation, in a playground environment and in a forest school environment
- Establishing which environment provides richer speech and language
- Hypothesising on why one environment may provide richer speech and language than others

In brief, I am researching whether the quality of different play/learning environments has an impact on the quality of young children's speech and language development. I have already collected people's views and opinions on what a quality environment is and what I need to do now is to record children's speech and then analyse that speech to see if there is a difference in the way that they speak depending on where they are playing.

To do this I will be recording children using go-pro type cameras whilst they play. Because of the nature of the research it may be that your child gets filmed, or their speech gets recorded. I am not going to include their details within my research however you obviously need to be aware that this is happening. Anything your child says or does will not be documented and I would like to assure you that your child will not be named at any time within my research, anonymity will be maintained at all times and although my work will be seen by the University of Northampton, it will be totally confidential and nothing will divulge your child's identity or the setting's identity at any time.

I would like to thank you, in advance for assisting me with this – once my research has been completed I will happily share my results with you, should you be interested. Please sign the slip attached to confirm receipt of this letter and to confirm that you have been advised of this research. If you have any questions on any aspect of this then please feel free to contact me at [tanya.richardson@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:tanya.richardson@northampton.ac.uk).

Kindest Regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tanya Richardson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tanya Richardson

I acknowledge receipt of the details of the research and am aware that my child may be inadvertently be captured on camera during the research that is being undertaken by Tanya Richardson

.....Signed

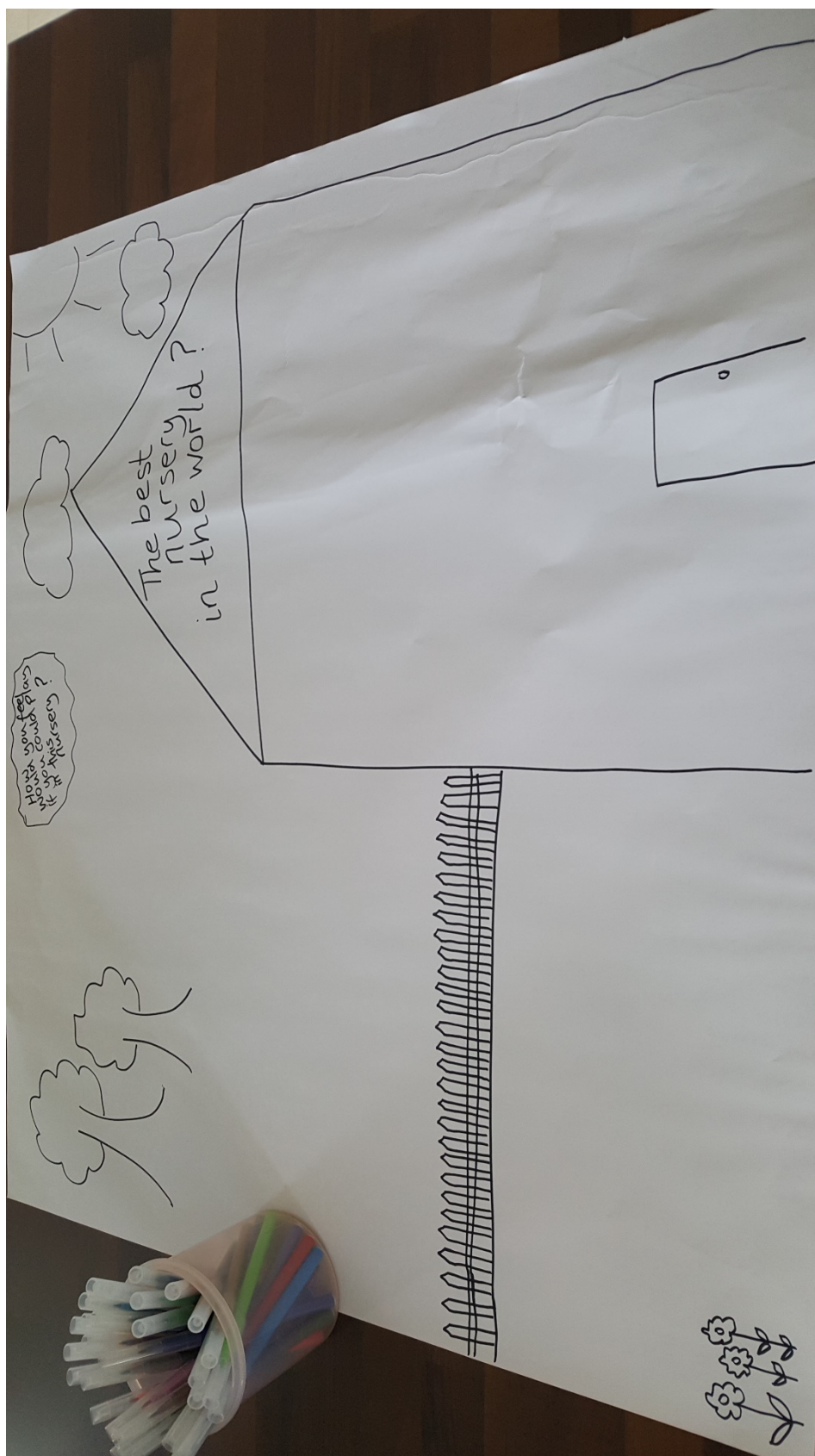
.....Print name

.....Date

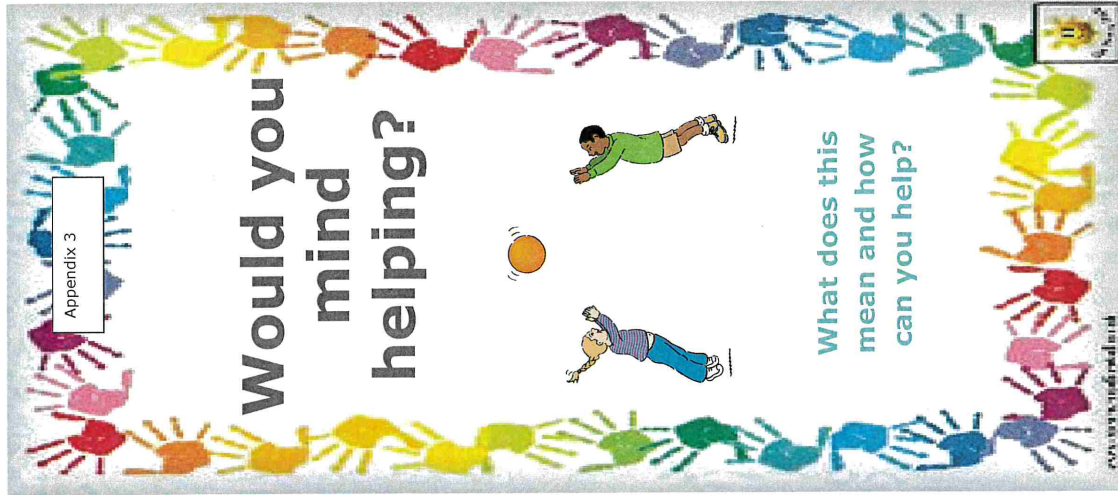
I would like to see the results of this research      Yes/No (delete as appropriate)

Appendix Twenty-Two

Children's picture prompt



## Appendix Twenty-Three

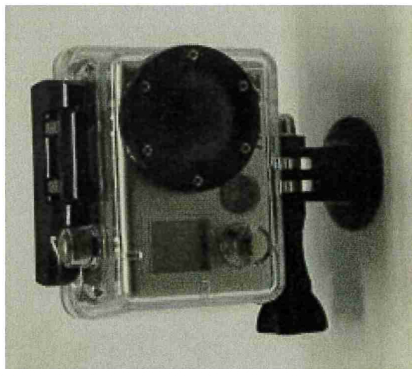


My name is Tanya Richardson and I am doing some work for a University. That is a big school for grown-ups.

If you want someone to send me a message then they can by emailing:

[tanya.richardson@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:tanya.richardson@northampton.ac.uk)





### What would you be asked to do?

I would like to clip a little camera (like the one in the picture) on your t-shirt or jumper and then record your voice while you are playing. You don't have to do anything special while you are wearing the microphone – just play and learn as you would normally. You can forget it's there and just have lots of fun as usual.

### Why am I asking you to do this?

I am trying to find out where is best for children to play and learn, so that they can get better at talking. By listening to what you say when you play I am hoping to be able to help other children to talk better.

I am going to write a book about what I learn but I will not tell anyone who helped me. I won't use your name at all so nobody will know what you have said. If I hear you say something though that I think might put you in danger then I might have to tell someone.

### Do you have to do this?

Not at all! If you do not want to help then that is fine. Nobody will make you do this. If you decide that you want to help and then you change your mind – again that is fine.

I want you to feel happy to help.



All images used have been labeled for re-use

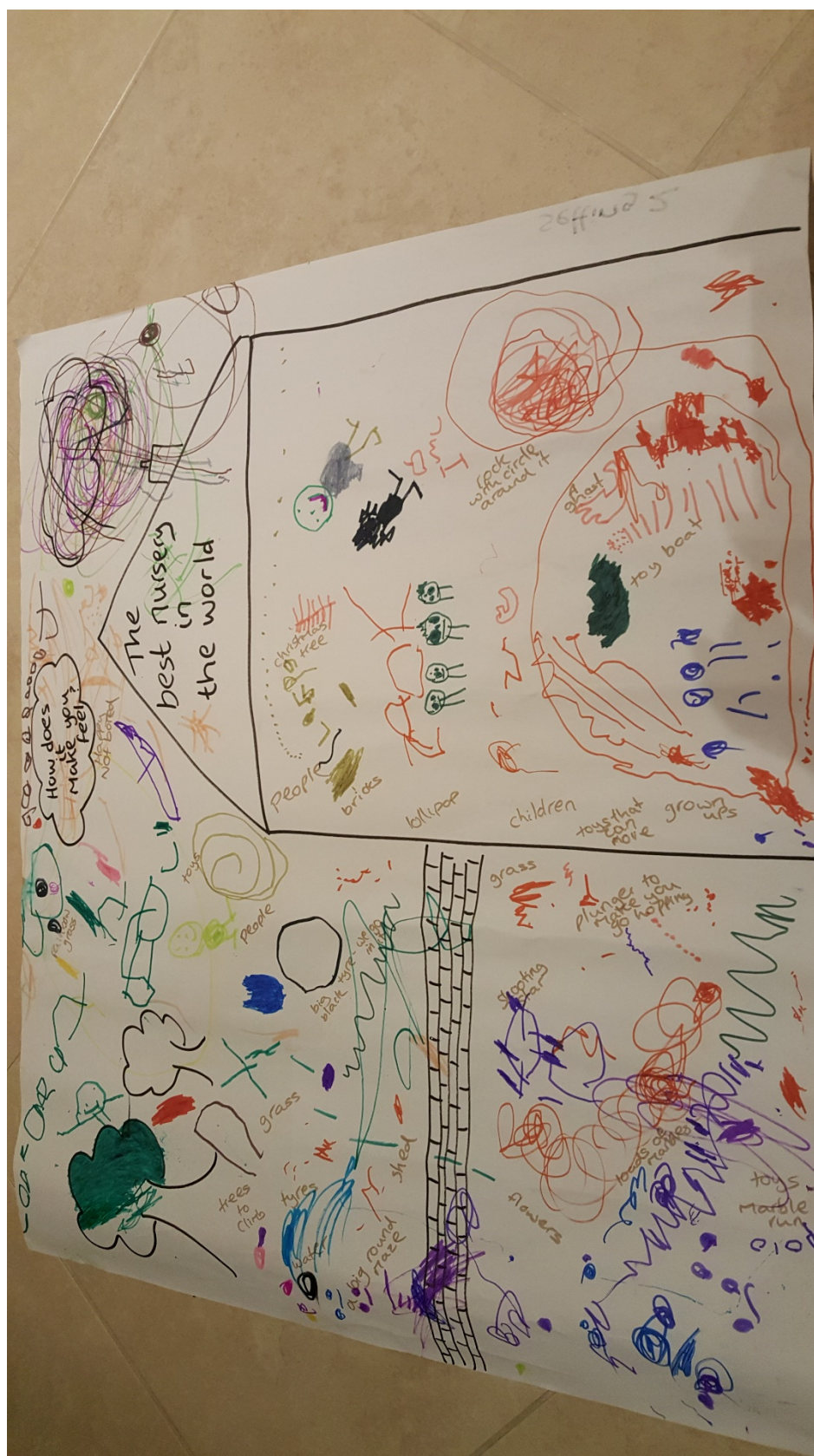


Appendix Twenty-Four  
Children's responses – setting one





**Appendix Twenty-Five**  
**Children's responses – setting two**





### **Appendix Twenty-Six**

#### **Children's responses – setting three**





**Appendix Twenty-Seven**  
**Children's responses – setting four**



## Appendix Twenty-Eight

This appendix presents findings from phase one (documented in chapter 7) in tabular form.

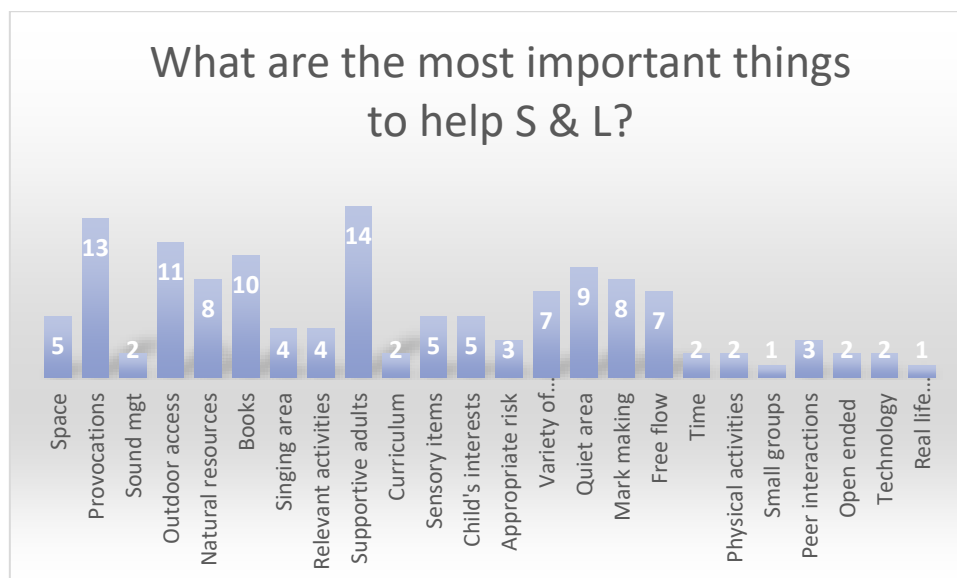


Fig 1: What are the most important things to help speech and language?

Fig. 1 above shows responses to the question "if you were to design the perfect environment to promote speech and language development, what would be the three most important things for you to include?"

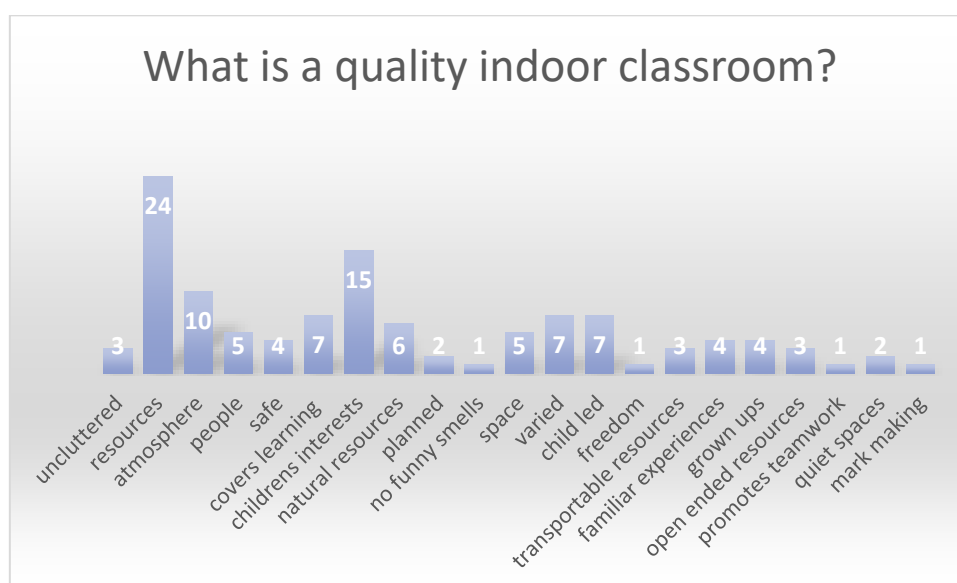


Fig. 2: What is a quality indoor classroom?

Fig. 2 above shows what respondents felt constituted a quality indoor environment when considering young children’s speech and language development.

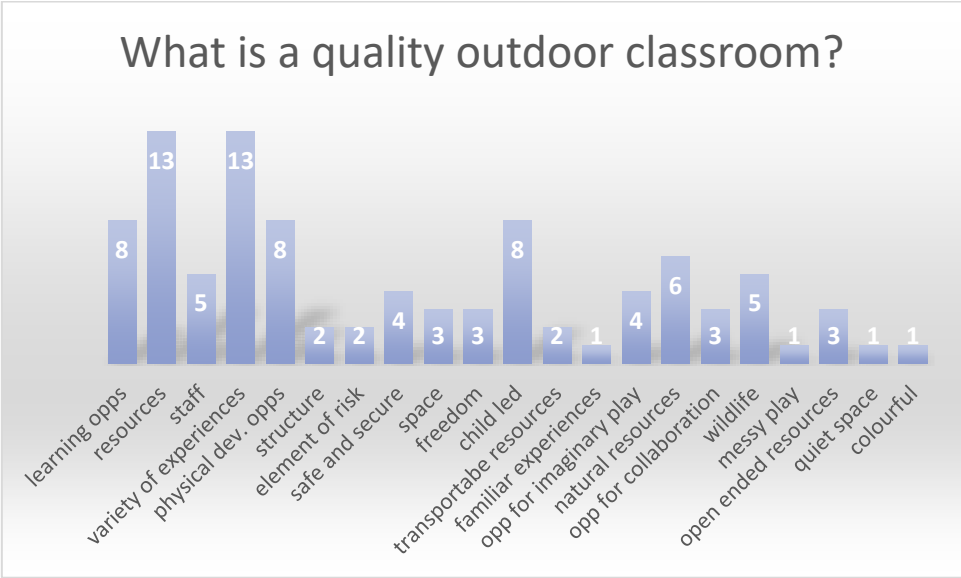


Fig 3: What is a quality outdoor classroom?

Fig. 3 above shows what respondents felt constituted a quality outdoor classroom when considering young children’s speech and language development.

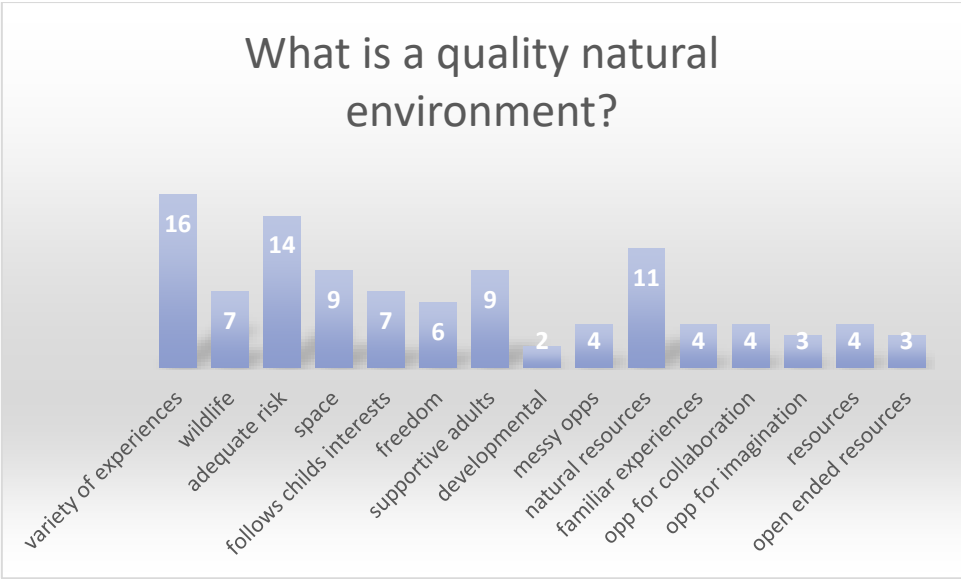


Fig.4: What is a quality natural environment?

Fig. 4 above shows what respondents felt constituted a quality natural environment when considering young children’s speech and language development.

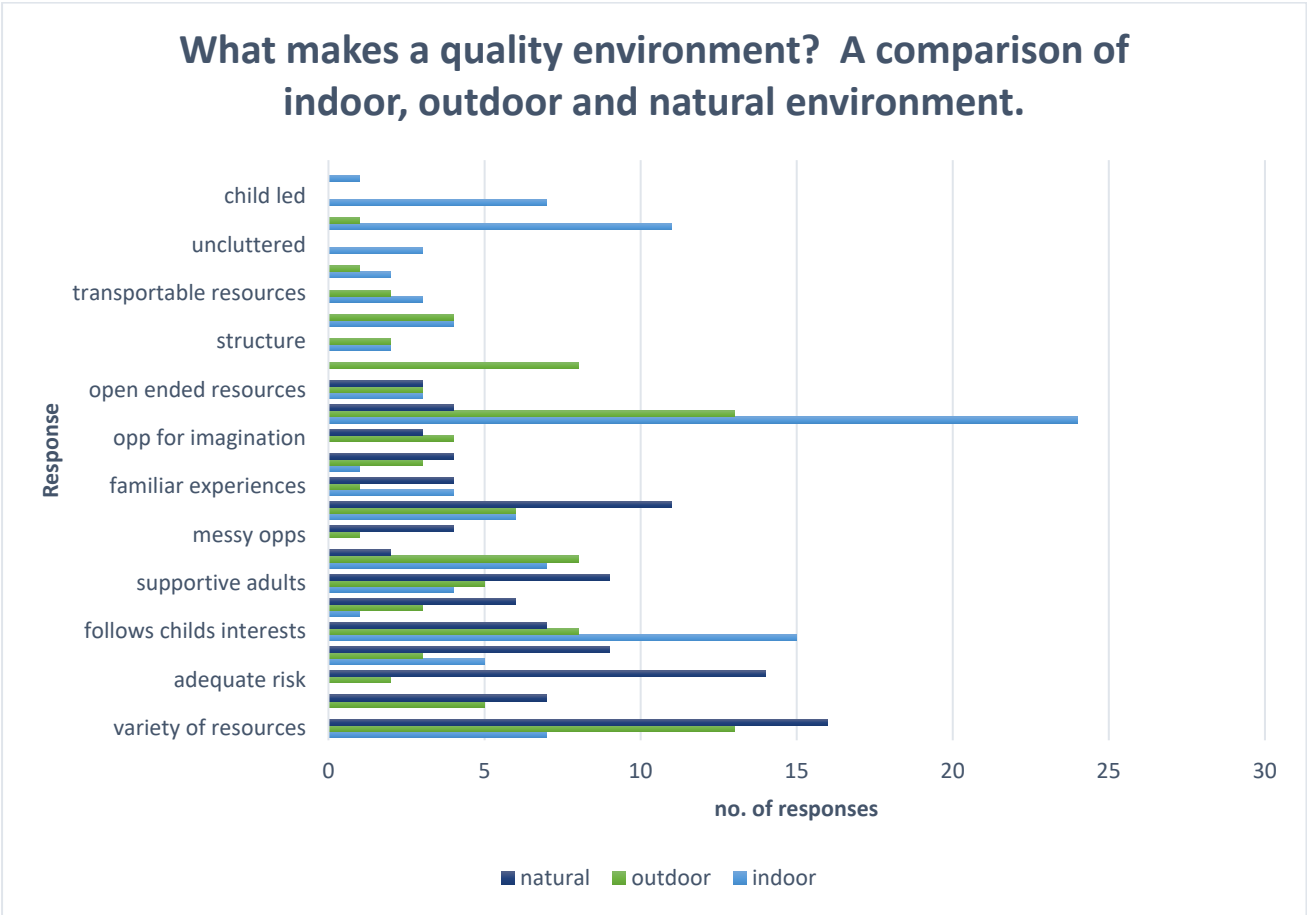


Fig 5: What makes a quality environment? A comparison of indoor classroom, outdoor classroom and natural environments.

Fig. 5 above shows the combination of figs. 2, 3 and 4 to provide a comparison of what respondents felt constituted a quality environment for play and learning with a view to aiding your children’s speech and language development.

Fig. 6 below shows the responses received from participants, when asked about how the indoor classroom can assist speech and language development:

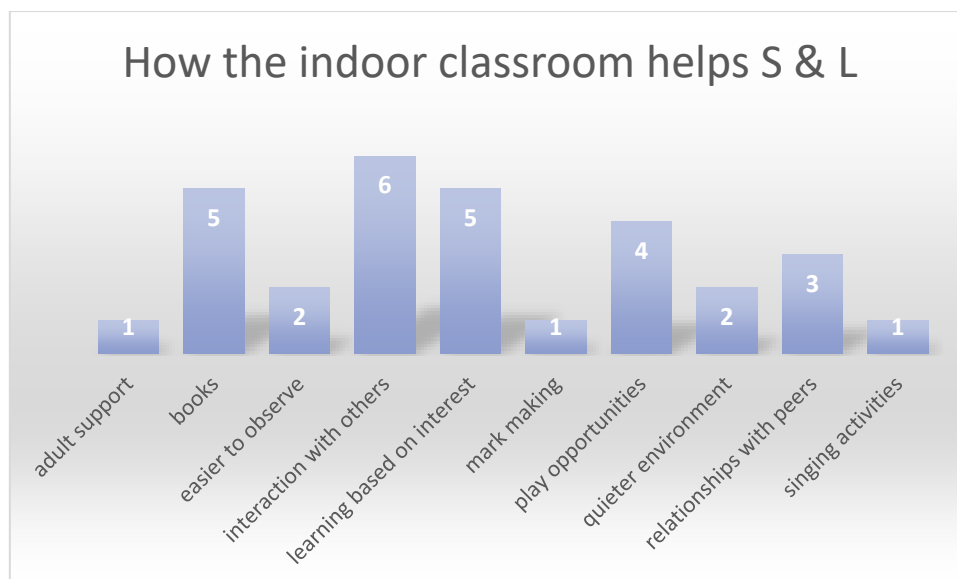


Fig 6: How the indoor classroom helps speech and language

Participants were also asked how they thought the outdoor classroom aided speech and language development, and the results of this question are shown in fig. 7 below:

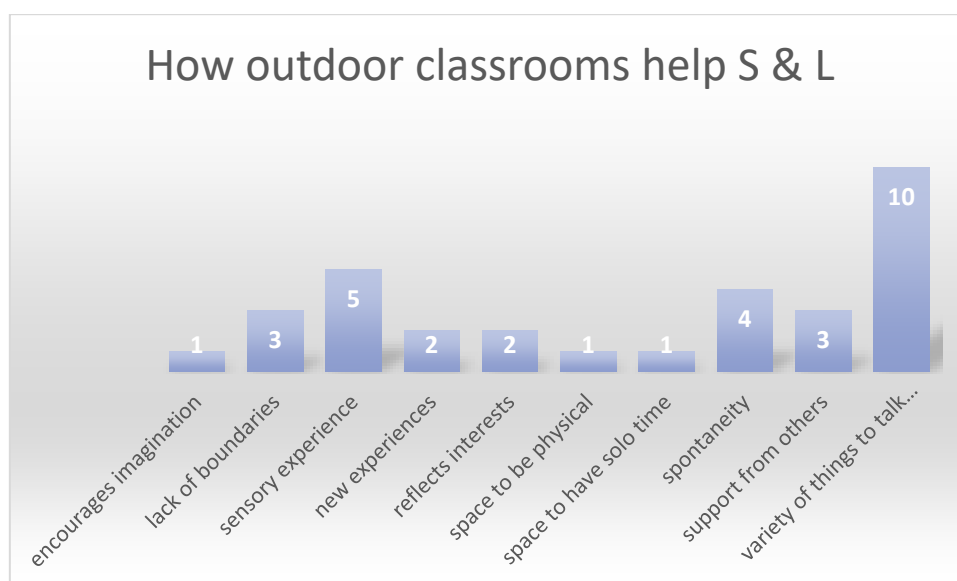


Fig. 7: How the outdoor classroom helps speech and language

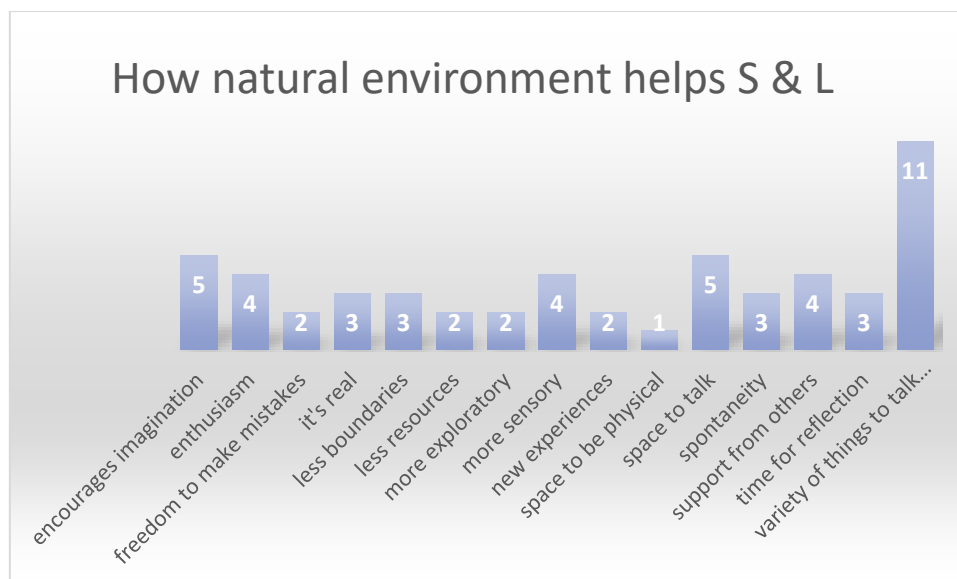


Fig.8: How natural environments help speech and language

Fig. 8 above shows what participants consider to be the benefits from a natural environment, with regards to assisting speech and language development.

# Transferable Quality Assessment Framework (TQAF)

with a specific focus on environments to  
promote speech and language

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2018

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## **Introduction**

This Transferable Quality Assessment Framework (TQAF) is designed to be used in any Early Years learning environment, whether that be an indoor environment, outdoor environment or within a natural environment (forest school, beach school or similar). The focus of this framework is to assess the quality of the environment when assisting young children with speech and language development. A glossary is provided on the last page of this document and should be referred to throughout.

The TQAF is designed to be, as the name suggests, transferrable between environments and therefore the aim is that this be applied to any environment in which young children are playing and learning, within an English context. The “elements” that are included within this framework have derived from empirical research and therefore represent a wide range of stakeholders’ views and opinions. The TQAF could be applied to the environment as a whole, or alternatively, could be applied to different areas within the Early Years environment, such as the indoor classroom, outdoor classroom and natural environment. Should definitions of key environments be required, the definitions adopted for the TQAF are as follows:

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### **Environment Definitions**

*Indoor classroom:* A play and learning environment that is contained and has limited exposure to the natural elements. This environment is likely to be divided into areas of development, is structured and is designed to promote learning. Toys and resources will be within this environment to aid learning.

*Outdoor classroom:* This environment is generally an extension to the indoor classroom mentioned above and is therefore likely to have similar resources and experiences as the indoors, although these resources may be more natural (not man-made). It is more of an open space than the indoors though so has exposure to the elements and has more opportunity for physical activities

*Natural environment:* This could be a forest school, woodland, beach or similar environment. This is not a manmade environment and the resources and experiences here are generally those found to be naturally occurring within that environment. Those visiting this environment will be fully exposed to the natural environment and will experience a connection with nature through exposure to the elements, the surroundings, resources and *wildlife*.

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### **Instructions for use**

The framework is devised using the grading system as used by Ofsted (2018) and ratings of Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement and Inadequate can therefore be utilised should it be deemed to be useful. It may be that scoring is not required and the nature of the framework will, in this instance, highlight areas where there are aspects that need development.

A scoring system, if required, should allocate the following scores to each element as appropriate:

Outstanding	Score 4
Good	Score 3
Requires improvement	Score 2
Inadequate	Score 1
Not applicable	Score 0

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It may be, when scoring a particular element, that the assessor feel that the score falls somewhere between two categories. In that instance highlight the document to indicate that and allocate a score in between the two. For example, if it is felt that there are aspects of outstanding and good in one particular element then a score of 3.5 could be awarded.

Common phrases are used throughout the TQAF and definitions of these phrases, from the perspective of this document, are as follows:

*A wide range:* A large variety. Opportunities exist to change experience often should the need arise. Children have a choice in what they access

*An adequate range:* Sufficient for the children to engage with. Children not likely to see new experiences often. There are elements of repetition. Children are engaged.

*A limited range:* Very little variety and little opportunity to change experience.

It is recommended that the TQAF be administered in conversation with others; not done independently. This conversation should be reflective and analytical and more than one

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viewpoint is therefore recommended to provide this depth and detail, as well as overcoming any potential bias.

Each element of assessment should be discussed, graded and the relevant box should be highlighted. If a specific element is not applicable to the environment then it should be marked as such. Scoring should then be carried out as follows:

- Add up the scores allocated to each element to give a total score for the area concerned (ie resources, environment or atmosphere). This will give a total score.
- Divide the total score between the number of elements that were considered to be applicable (disregard the elements that were felt to be non-applicable)
- This score will then relate to the rating as previously discussed

When all areas are completed a total score can be calculated to give an overall quality score for the environment, with regards to speech and language encouragement.

It is recommended that an action plan then be drawn up at the end of the process to plan areas for development within the environment. This can be used as evidence at inspections to show the setting's commitment to improvement.

## 1. Resources

	Element	Outstanding (score 4)	Good (score 3)	Requires Improvement (score 2)	Inadequate (score 1)	Not applicable (score 0)
1.1	<i>Provocations</i>	There are a <i>wide</i> range of items to promote questioning and conversation. These items tend to be unusual objects There is a <i>wide</i> range of mark making materials available to children as required	Several items are present to promote questioning and conversation. These items may be unusual There is an <i>adequate</i> range of mark making materials available to children as required	One or two unusual objects may be present however are not rotated so have become familiar to children There is a <i>limited</i> amount of mark making materials available to children. They may have to ask to access these	No unusual resources are available to prompt conversation or discussion Very few resources available to children. Children may have to seek out the resources they require	This element is not applicable to this environment
1.2	Mark making materials (NB - not necessarily pens/paper etc – can be naturally occurring)					This element is not applicable to this environment
1.3	<i>Natural resources/wildlife</i>	There is a <i>wide</i> range of <i>natural resources/wildlife</i> throughout the environment	There is an <i>adequate</i> range of <i>natural resources/wildlife</i> throughout the environment	There is a <i>limited</i> amount of <i>natural resources/wildlife</i> within the environment	There is no access to <i>natural resources/wildlife</i>	This element is not applicable to this environment
1.4	Promoting <i>physical activity</i>	There are a <i>wide</i> range of resources/activities to promote <i>physical activity</i>	There is an <i>adequate</i> range of resources/activities to promote <i>physical activity</i>	There is a <i>limited</i> range of resources/activities to promote <i>physical activity</i>	There are no resources/activities to promote <i>physical activity</i>	This element is not applicable to this environment

1.5	Sensory items – allowing mess	There are a <i>wide</i> range of sensory items to engage a variety of senses. Children are able to get messy if they wish	There is an <i>adequate</i> range of sensory items to engage senses. Children are able to get messy if they wish	There is a <i>limited</i> range of sensory items. Children are able to get messy if they wish	There are no sensory items available. Children are discouraged from getting messy	This element is not applicable to this environment
1.6	Variety of resources	There are a <i>wide</i> range of resources that are rotated as needed in line with children's engagement levels	There is an <i>adequate</i> range of resources that are rotated as needed in line with children's engagement levels	There is a <i>limited</i> range of resources with limited rotation. The same resources are regularly put out, with little variation	There is no variety in resources and experiences offered. Children appear disengaged with the resources available	This element is not applicable to this environment
1.7	Familiar experiences – <i>real life experiences</i>	The resources and experiences provided represent children's social and cultural backgrounds. A <i>wide</i> range of <i>real life</i> experiences are provided	Some resources and experiences provided represent children's social and cultural backgrounds. An <i>adequate</i> range of <i>real life</i> experiences are provided	A <i>limited</i> amount of resources and experiences provided represent children's social and cultural backgrounds. A <i>limited</i> range of <i>real life</i> experiences are provided	The resources and experiences provided do not tend to represent children's social and cultural backgrounds. No <i>real life</i> experiences are provided	This element is not applicable to this environment
1.8	<i>Transportable</i> resources/ <i>loose parts</i>	There are a <i>wide</i> range of <i>transportable</i> resources/ <i>loose parts</i> that children are able to move between areas in line with their direction of play	There is an <i>adequate</i> range of <i>transportable</i> resources/ <i>loose parts</i> that children are able to move between areas in line with their direction of play	There is a <i>limited</i> range of <i>transportable</i> resources/ <i>loose parts</i> that children are able to move between areas in line with their direction of play, however there may be rules on where transportation can occur	There are no <i>transportable</i> resources/ <i>loose parts</i> . Children are not permitted to move resources between areas	This element is not applicable to this environment
1.9	Encourage development	All resources are purposefully provided in line with children's developmental needs	An <i>adequate</i> amount of the resources are purposefully provided in line with children's developmental needs	A <i>limited</i> amount of the resources are purposefully provided in line with children's developmental needs	None of the resources are purposefully provided in line with children's developmental needs	This element is not applicable to this environment

<b>1.10</b>	<b>Opportunity for collaboration</b>	A wide range of the resources and experiences are provided to encourage collaboration. Children regularly co-operate in their play	An adequate range of the resources and experiences are provided to encourage collaboration. Children occasionally co-operate in their play	A limited range of resources and experiences are provided to encourage collaboration. Children rarely co-operate in their play	No resources and experiences are provided to encourage collaboration. Children are not seen to co-operate in their play	This element is not applicable to this environment
<b>1.11</b>	<b>Books</b>	A wide range of appropriate and good quality books are available (although not necessarily all at the same time). They are rotated in line with children's engagement. They are not just restricted to a book corner but are freely available throughout the environment	An adequate range of appropriate and good quality books are available (although not necessarily all at the same time). They are rotated in line with children's engagement. They are not just restricted to a book corner but are freely available throughout the environment	A limited range of appropriate and good quality books are available. They may be just restricted to a book corner	Books are available but may not be appropriate and may be poor quality. There may be a large amount of books available at all times. They will be restricted to a book corner. It may also be that there are no books within the environment.	This element is not applicable to this environment

	Environment one	Environment two	Environment three
a) Total score for resources			
b) No of applicable elements			
c) Average score for resources (a divide by b)			
d) Overall grading for resources			



## 2. Environment

	Element	Outstanding (score 4)	Good (score 3)	Requires Improvement (score 2)	Inadequate (score 1)	Not applicable (score 0)
2.1	Quiet areas	There is ample space within the environment that is inviting and quiet to allow children space to think and talk Children are able to move freely around the environment with easy access to resources and experiences as required	There is some space within the environment that is inviting and quiet to allow children space to think and talk Children are able to move freely around most of the environment with limited access to resources and experiences as required	There is very little space within the environment that is inviting and quiet to allow children space to think and talk Children may be able to move around most of the environment, however there will be substantial restrictions. Children may have limited access to resources and experiences as required	There is no space within the environment that is inviting and quiet to allow children space to think and talk Children are not able to move freely around the environment and have to ask an adult to access to resources and experiences as required	This element is not applicable to this environment
2.2	Accessibility	Children are able to move freely around the environment with easy access to resources and experiences as required	Children are able to move freely around most of the environment with limited access to resources and experiences as required	Children are able to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environment for most of the day	Children are not able to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environment	This element is not applicable to this environment
2.3	Access between indoors/outdoors	Children are able to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environment at any time	Children are able to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environment for most of the day	Children are able to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environment within certain timescales	Children are not able to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environment	This element is not applicable to this environment
2.4	Singing area	There is an area within the environment that allows children to sing and that provides the resources to make music when required	There is an area within the environment that allows children to sing and resources to make music may be available at designated times	There is an area within the environment that allows children to sing. Resources are not available.	There is an area within the environment that allows children to sing and make music when required	This element is not applicable to this environment

2.5	Space	There is a large amount of space which allows children to move freely and explore the area as required.	There is an adequate amount of space which allows children to move freely and explore the area as required.	There are restrictions on the amount of space and this can restrict children in their ability to move freely and explore the area as required.	There is insufficient space and children are not able to move freely and explore the area as required.	This element is not applicable to this environment
2.6	Safe	The environment is set up in a way that children are safe and secure. Risk assessments do not restrict activities/experiences as the environment is managed appropriately	The environment is set up in a way that children are safe and secure. Risk assessments can, at times, restrict activities/experiences	The environment is set up in a way that children are safe and secure. Risk assessments do restrict activities/experiences	The environment is set up in a way that children are not safe or secure	This element is not applicable to this environment
2.7	Adequate risks - boundaries	There are a <i>wide range</i> of resources/activities to encourage children to take adequate risks	There are an <i>adequate range</i> of resources/activities to encourage children to take adequate risks	There is a <i>limited</i> range of resources/activities to encourage children to take adequate risks	There are no resources/activities to encourage children to take risk. Children are actively discouraged from risk taking	This element is not applicable to this environment
2.8	Uncluttered – appropriate amounts	The correct amount of resources are always available to make the environment appear attractive and exciting. The environment is not cluttered or over stocked.	The amount of resources available often appear to meet children's needs. The environment is not cluttered or over stocked.	There are a large amount of resources available at any one time and this can detract from the experiences offered. The environment can appear cluttered or over stocked.	There are far too many resources within the environment which is overwhelming and distracting. The environment is cluttered/over stocked.	This element is not applicable to this environment
2.9	Prompts imagination	There are a <i>wide range</i> of resources/activities to promote children's imagination	There are an <i>adequate range</i> of resources/activities to promote children's imagination	There is a <i>limited</i> range of resources/activities to promote children's imagination	There are no resources/activities to promote children's imagination	This element is not applicable to this environment
2.10	Space to talk and discuss	There is ample space within the environment that encourages children to talk to others	There is some space within the environment that encourages children to talk to others	There is very little space within the environment that encourages children to talk to others	There is no space within the environment that encourages children to talk to others	This element is not applicable to this environment

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	Environment one	Environment two	Environment three
a) Total score for environment			
b) No of applicable elements			
c) Average score for environment (a divide by b)			
d) Overall grading for environment			

### 3. Atmosphere

	Element	Outstanding (score 4)	Good (score 3)	Requires Improvement (score 2)	Inadequate (score 1)	Not applicable (score 0)
3.1	Acoustics	The noise levels are managed well, at all times. Children are able to be heard and to hear others	The noise levels are managed well most of the time. Children are generally able to be heard and can hear others	The noise levels are high at times and as such children may not always be heard or hear others	The noise levels are too high and children struggle to be heard or hear others	This element is not applicable to this environment
3.2	Freedom	The environment always allows children the freedom to play and learn in a way that suits them. Boundaries exist but they are managed well and as such children are independent in their play	The environment often allows children the freedom to play and learn in a way that suits them. Boundaries exist but they are managed and as such children are mainly independent in their play	The environment sometimes allows children the freedom to play and learn in a way that suits them. Boundaries exist and they are managed in a way that can inhibit children's independent play	The environment does not allow children the freedom to play and learn in a way that suits them. Boundaries exist and restrict children's independent play	This element is not applicable to this environment
3.3	Time	Children are always given the time to engage in play and learning. They can always revisit areas of interest when required. Routines of the setting do not interrupt their play unnecessarily	Children are often given the time to engage in play and learning. They often have opportunity to revisit areas of interest when required. Routines of the setting occasionally interrupt their play unnecessarily	Children are sometimes given the time to engage in play and learning. Occasionally, they can revisit areas of interest when required. Routines of the setting do tend to interrupt their play at times	Children are not given the time to engage in play and learning. They cannot revisit areas of interest when required. Routines of the setting interrupt their play unnecessarily	This element is not applicable to this environment

3.4	Supportive environment – space for role modelling (NB – role modelling can come from peers as well as adults)	The environment, and those in it, constantly provide the support for children to try new experiences and to extend their learning.	The environment, and those in it, often provide the support for children to try new experiences and to extend their learning.	The environment, and those in it, sometimes provide the support for children to try new experiences and to extend their learning.	The environment, and those in it, do not provide the support for children to try new experiences and to extend their learning.	This element is not applicable to this environment
3.5	Child led/follows children's interests	The environment, and those within it, is constantly responsive to children's interests and has the flexibility to adapt to meet the needs of the children	The environment, and those within it, is generally responsive to children's interests and generally has the flexibility to adapt to meet the needs of the children	The environment, and those within it, is sometimes responsive to children's interests and on occasions has the flexibility to adapt to meet the needs of the children	The environment, and those within it, are not responsive to children's interests and does not have the flexibility to adapt to meet the needs of the children	This element is not applicable to this environment
3.6	How does the environment feel?	When looking around, children are happy and appear relaxed and calm. They are engaged in their play. This gives a very good overall feeling	When looking around, children are generally happy and appear relaxed and calm. Most are engaged in their play. This gives a good overall feeling	When looking around, children are sometimes happy and some appear relaxed and calm. Some are engaged in their play. This gives a Requires Improvement overall feeling	When looking around, children are unhappy and do not appear relaxed and calm. They are not engaged in their play. This gives an unsatisfactory overall feeling	This element is not applicable to this environment

	Environment one	Environment two	Environment three
a) Total score for atmosphere			
b) No of applicable elements			
c) Average score for atmosphere (a divide by b)			
d) Overall grading for atmosphere			

Overall rating of environments

	Environment one	Environment two	Environment three
a) Overall total score for TQAF (total of all elements)			
b) Total no of applicable elements throughout TQAF			
c) Overall average score for TQAF (a divide by b)			
d) Overall grading for TQAF			

Action plan

What needs to be done?	What element does this relate to?	How?	When?	Who?	Has it been done?

Add more rows as necessary – this should be a working document and adapted as needed



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### **Glossary:**

*A limited range:* Very little variety and little opportunity to change experience.

*A wide range:* A large variety. Opportunities exist to change experience often should the need arise. Children have a choice in what they access

*An adequate range:* Sufficient for the children to engage with. Children not likely to see new experiences often. There are elements of repetition. Children are engaged.

*Indoor classroom:* A play and learning environment that is contained and has limited exposure to the natural elements. This environment is likely to be divided into areas of development, is structured and is designed to promote learning. Toys and resources will be within this environment to aid learning.

*Loose parts:* Resources that have no set purpose. These may also referred to as open ended resources. Examples of loose parts could be cardboard boxes, reels, tubes, tyres etc.

*Natural environment:* This could be a forest school, woodland, beach or similar environment. This is not a manmade environment and the resources and experiences here are generally those found to be naturally occurring within that environment. Those visiting this environment

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will be fully exposed to the natural environment and will experience a connection with nature through exposure to the elements, the surroundings, resources and wildlife.

*Natural resources:* Resources that are not man-made and are naturally available. Examples of these types of resource could be pine cones, leaves, wood, mud, water, sand etc

*Outdoor classroom:* This environment is generally an extension to the indoor classroom mentioned above and is therefore likely to have similar resources and experiences as the indoors, although these resources may be more natural (not man-made). It is more of an open space than the indoors though so has exposure to the elements and has more opportunity for physical activities

*Physical activity:* An activity or experience that will encourage children to use their gross motor skills and to exert themselves physically

*Provocations:* Items that provoke conversation, thought, curiosity and questioning. They are likely to be things that are 'different' and will therefore prompt interest.

*Real life experiences:* Experiences that represent situations that children will be used to within their lives. These experiences will represent social and cultural aspects of a child's life. Home corners and role play experiences are likely to fall within this category.

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*Sensory items:* Resources provided, or naturally occurring, that will engage the senses of smell, taste, touch etc. These items may result in children becoming messy but not necessarily so.

*Transportable resources:* Items that can be moved from one play space to another. There would be no restrictions on where children can engage with these resources to be fully transportable.

*Wildlife:* This can be insects, bugs, animals, pets – either naturally occurring or placed within the environment (such as guinea pigs or rabbits in a cage)

**Appendix Thirty**  
**Pilot transcriptions**

Olivia in natural environment (stripey dress)

18:55:09 – 18:57:07 (1min 58 secs)

When my back to nursery can we play outside? Do you know the camera button?  
Don't press the camera button. Vegetables. I'm picking some of these. Yes. I'm  
taking these home to let my mum see then and know what's on the farm. Look.  
They're flowers. Earlier I can show (my mum)

Tyler in natural environment

18:45:45 – 18:46:55 (1 min 10 secs)

I took one. I took a picture. Yes it's still recording. I did a selfie... I took a picture.  
Yes. I know how to.. (23 words)  
(then took camera off himself and didn't want it anymore)

Olivia in indoor classroom (playing with doctors kit)

19:41:55 – 19:44:40 (2 mins 45 secs)

Ok. Up your nose? What one? OK. This is for J. Yours. Right. Right got some  
gloves. Right we're going to clean out my rabbits aren't we pets? Right. There is an  
animal. Let me get my gloves. Who wants to come with me? I'm a puppy. In a  
minute.

Tyler in indoor classroom (playing with doctors kit)

19:33:18-19:35:14 (1 min 56 secs)

Look, look at me L. What are you doing? I'll lay it on here. Who wants cal(pol),  
who wants medicine? Who wants medicine? Who wants medicine? Do you want  
medicine? Do you want medicine? Who wants medicine? A have a look, A, A. I  
want to listen, I want, look

Boy with red t-shirt – indoor classroom (playing with dinosaurs)

21:14:44 – 21:17:18 (2 mins 34 secs)

Yes. It's just a bit dark. Can I see? It's a bit dark in there, so. Can we try if this one  
will go in and this one go in. Can you do that? Do that. I'll do it. Put it back on  
here. Put it back on here. Can.....

Boy with blue crocs Harry – indoor classroom

21:58:48 – 22:11:40

OK. Why's that in here? I want some gooske (inaudible)

In all the time that this was recorded he did not say anything else. Played on own  
whole time. Watched other children a lot of the time. Wanted to play outside and  
told "we're not playing outside now" (escaped outside and bought back in)

Girl in pink dress – indoor classroom

21:56:43 - 21:57:45 (58 secs)

M what have you got. Z, Say something. Z. How you feeling doctor? I'll be the  
doctor. This is my, Z, this is the suncream. No we're not going out yet. OK. Look,  
this is, we're, we're the ones where mums have to stop and say can I help you.

5 recordings in indoor classroom and 2 recordings in natural environment

### **Appendix Thirty-One**

Lexical Analysis for child 2 – pilot setting – natural environment

Word type	Word spoken	No of times	TTR calculation
Noun	Picture	2	
	I	5	
	Selfie	1	$3/8 = 37.5\%$
Verb	Took	3	
	Know	1	
	Recording	1	
	It's	1	
	Did	1	$5/7 = 71.4\%$
Adjective	One	1	$1/1 = 100\%$
Adverb	still	1	
	How	1	$2/2 = 100\%$
Exclamation	Yes	2	$1/2 = 50\%$
Preposition	To	1	$1/1 = 100\%$
Determiner	A	3	$1/3 = 33.33\%$

NB – this child only spoke 23 words as decided that he did not want to wear the camera any longer so recording stopped.

**Overall TTR:  $14/23 = 60.9\%$  lexical diversity**

TTR calculation: number of different words/number of utterances.  
Higher percentage = higher quality.

Lexical Analysis for child 5 – pilot setting – indoor classroom

Word type	Word spoken	No of times	TTR calculation
Noun	Doctor	2	
	I	1	
	Suncream	1	
	M (child's name)	1	
	Z (child's name)	3	
	Mums	1	
	Ones	1	7/10 = 70%
Pronoun	Something	1	
	You	3	
	My	1	
	This	3	4/8 = 50%
Verb	Got	1	
	I'll	1	
	Feeling	1	
	Look	1	
	Be	1	
	Stop	1	
	Have	2	
	Say	2	
	Can	1	
	Help	1	
	Going	1	
	Is	3	
	We're	3	13/19 = 68.4%
	How	1	
	Yet	1	
Adverb	Not	1	
	Out	1	
	Where	1	5/5 = 100%
Preposition	to	1	1/1 = 100%
Determiner	What	1	
	The	3	2/4 = 50%
Exclamation	Ok	1	
	No	1	2/2 = 100%
Connector	And	1	1/1 = 100%

**Overall TTR: 35/50 = 70% lexical diversity**

TTR calculation: number of different words/number of utterances.  
Higher percentage = higher quality.

## Appendix Thirty-Two

**Key:** Score of 4 Score of 2 No colour = not applicable  
Score of 3 Score of 1

The charts that follow will present a comparison of element ratings for all of the sample settings, with the aim of identifying any patterns that exist and the variables that are present within the environments.

Fig 1: Comparison of resources elements for indoor classroom

Fig.1 above shows the comparison of resources elements for the indoor classrooms across all four settings. Worthy of note from this analysis is that element 1.2 (mark

	Setting one		Setting two		Setting three		Setting four	
	TR	KH	TR	KH	TR	KH	TR	KH
1.1								
1.2								
1.3								
1.4								
1.5								
1.6								
1.7								
1.8								
1.9								
1.10								
1.11								

making materials) only scored the maximum of four in one setting, setting two, with all of the other settings scoring three or less. Also element 1.4 (promoting physical activity) did not score the maximum of four in any setting within the indoor classroom.

	Setting one		Setting two		Setting three		Setting four	
	TR	KH	TR	KH	TR	KH	TR	KH
2.1								
2.2								
2.3								
2.4								
2.5								
2.6								
2.7								
2.8								
2.9								
2.10								

Fig. 2: Comparison of environment elements for indoor classroom

Fig. 2 above compares the environment elements of the indoor classrooms of the four sample settings. What can be seen from this table is that element 2.2 (accessibility) was the only element that scored four across all settings, indicating that all settings operated in a way that allowed children to access the space and resources in a way that fostered belonging (Phillips, 2015).

	Setting one		Setting two		Setting three		Setting four	
	TR	KH	TR	KH	TR	KH	TR	KH
3.1								
3.2								
3.3								
3.4								
3.5								
3.6								

Fig. 3: Comparison of atmosphere elements for indoor classroom

The table above (fig.3) shows a comparison of atmosphere elements for the four settings' indoor classrooms. There are no particular patterns across the settings, identified within this analysis.

	Setting one		Setting two		Setting three		Setting four	
	TR	KH	TR	KH	TR	KH	TR	KH
1.1								
1.2								
1.3								
1.4								
1.5								
1.6								
1.7								
1.8								
1.9								
1.10								
1.11								

Fig. 4: Comparison of resources elements for outdoor classroom

When comparing the resources elements within the four settings' outdoor classrooms fig. 4, above, shows the results. Element 1.9 (encourage development) was the only element of the 11 that scored the maximum of four within all settings compared to element 1.11 (books) which did not score the maximum within any setting in the outdoor classroom. Also worthy of note is that elements 1.5 (sensory items/allowing mess), 1.6 (variety of resources) and 1.8 (transportable resources/loose parts) scored the maximum in all four settings, apart from in setting four when assessed by KH.

	Setting one		Setting two		Setting three		Setting four	
	TR	KH	TR	KH	TR	KH	TR	KH
2.1								
2.2								
2.3								
2.4								
2.5								
2.6								
2.7								
2.8								
2.9								
2.10								

Fig. 5: Comparison of environment elements for outdoor classroom

Fig.5 above shows the comparison of environment elements for all four settings within their outdoor classrooms, and the only element to score the maximum across



all settings, was 2.10 (space to talk and discuss). Element 2.6 (safe) scored the maximum of four in all settings, apart from in setting three when analysed by KH.

	Setting one		Setting two		Setting three		Setting four	
	TR	KH	TR	KH	TR	KH	TR	KH
3.1								
3.2								
3.3								
3.4								
3.5								
3.6								

Fig. 6: Comparison of atmosphere elements for outdoor classroom

The comparison of atmosphere elements within the outdoor classrooms of the four sample settings can be seen in fig. 6 above. It can be noted from this comparison that elements 3.1 (acoustics) and 3.2 (freedom) were the two elements that scored the maximum of four across all settings. Also, element 3.6 (how does the environment make you feel?) scored the maximum across all settings, apart from in setting four when assessed by KH.

The tables that follow show the comparison for the natural environments within the settings. Setting three has no responses within this area as the natural environment was not accessed at any time during the research period. There is therefore only a comparison of three settings presented below.

Fig. 7: Comparison of resources elements for natural environment

When comparing the resources elements within the natural environments across the three settings, fig. 7 above provides this visual comparison. Four elements scored the maximum score of four across the sample settings within the natural environments;

	Setting one		Setting two		Setting three		Setting four	
	TR	KH	TR	KH	TR	KH	TR	KH
1.1								
1.2								
1.3								
1.4								
1.5								
1.6								
1.7								
1.8								
1.9								
1.10								
1.11								

1.3 (natural resources/wildlife), 1.4 (promoting physical activity), 1.5 (sensory items/allowing mess) and 1.8 (transportable resources/loose parts). In contrast to this there were two elements that only scored four in one setting, with element 1.2 (mark making materials) only scoring four in setting two (as assessed by TR) and element 1.6 (variety of resources) only scoring four in setting two (as assessed by TR). Element 1.9 (encourage development) scored the maximum of four in all settings apart from one, that being setting four (as assessed by TR). One element was notably “not applicable” more than others within the natural environment and that was element 1.11 (books), which was rated as not applicable within setting one by both assessors.

	Setting one		Setting two		Setting three		Setting four	
	TR	KH	TR	KH	TR	KH	TR	KH
2.1								
2.2								
2.3								
2.4								
2.5								
2.6								
2.7								
2.8								
2.9								
2.10								

Fig. 8: Comparison of environment elements for natural environment

In fig. 8 above, a comparison of the environment elements within the three settings' natural environments is presented. Elements 2.1 (quiet areas), 2.2 (accessibility), 2.5 (space), 2.6 (safe), 2.7 (adequate risk/boundaries), 2.9 (prompts imagination) and 2.10 (space to talk and discuss) all gained the maximum scores across the three sample settings who had natural environments assessed. Element 2.3 (access between indoors/outdoors) either scored low or received a not applicable rating across the settings. Element 2.4 (singing area) scored variably, with scores ranging from not applicable to the maximum of four being awarded by KH within the same setting as TR scored as one. This was the biggest discrepancy noted between assessors throughout the whole analysis.

	Setting one		Setting two		Setting three		Setting four	
	TR	KH	TR	KH	TR	KH	TR	KH
3.1								
3.2								
3.3								
3.4								
3.5								
3.6								

Fig. 9: Comparison of atmosphere elements for natural environment

Fig. 9 above compares the atmosphere elements for the three settings within their natural environments. Four elements out of the six scored the maximum of four across these settings; 3.1 (acoustics), 3.2 (freedom), 3.3 (time) and 3.6 (how does the environment make you feel?). Element 3.4 (supportive environment – space for role modelling) was the lowest scoring element across the board with only two of the five assessments generating the maximum score.

### Comparison of Resources ratings for each setting

Figure 10 below shows the four settings' results on the TQAF when analysing the theme of Resources. This indicates that setting four obtained the lowest rating within all three environments. In the

outdoor classroom all other settings obtained the same rating (3.7) when scoring the resources. The only setting that obtained maximum scoring of four in any one environment was setting two within the forest school environment.

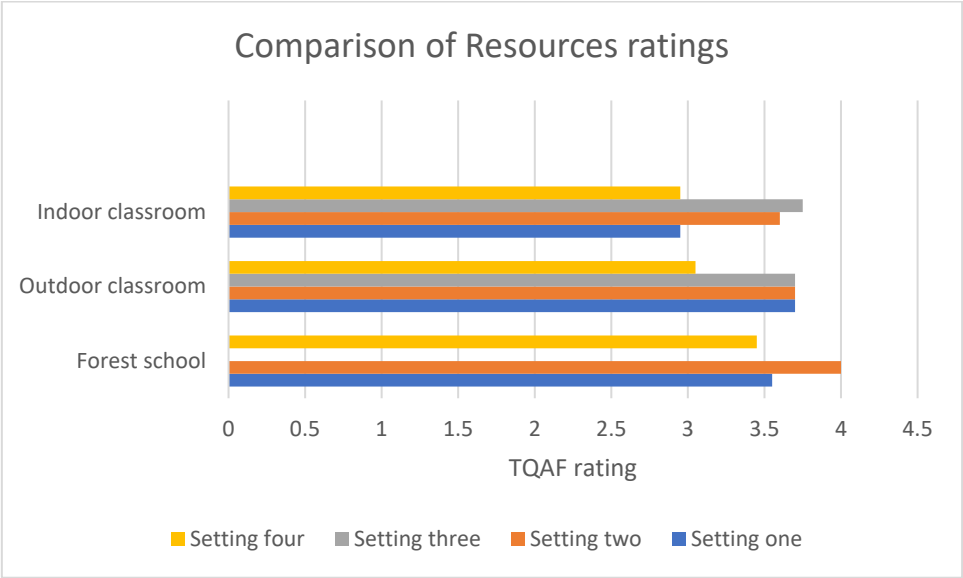


Fig. 10: Comparisons of Resources ratings

**Comparison of Environment ratings for each setting**

It can be seen from figure 11 below that setting three scored the highest within both the indoor and the outdoor classroom when comparing the environment ratings. Setting one was the lowest scoring setting within all three environments.

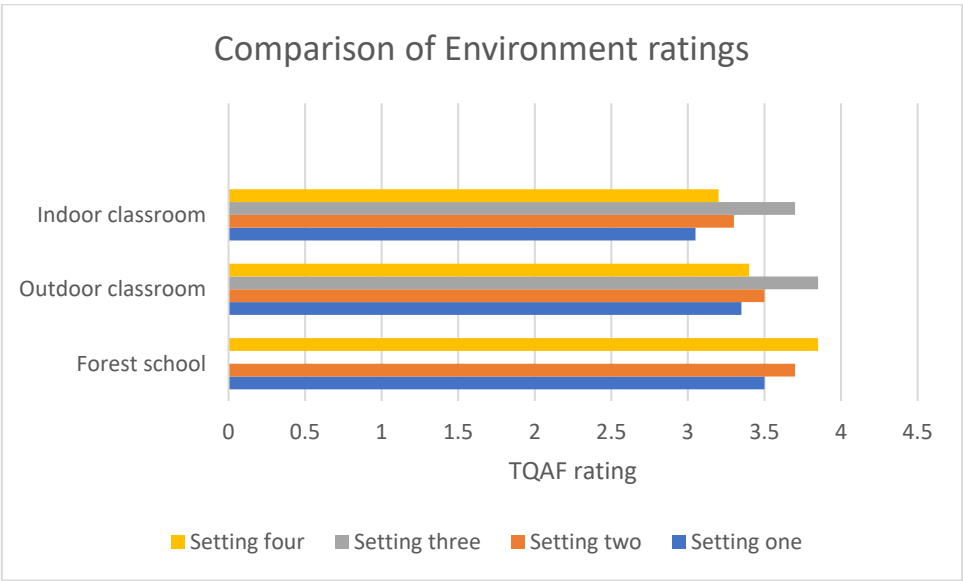


Fig. 11: Comparisons of Environment ratings

### Comparison of Atmosphere ratings for each setting

When comparing the atmosphere ratings for each setting, figure 12 below shows that several maximum scores of four were obtained, with setting two getting a score of four in both the outdoor classroom and the forest school and setting one obtaining a four within the outdoor classroom.

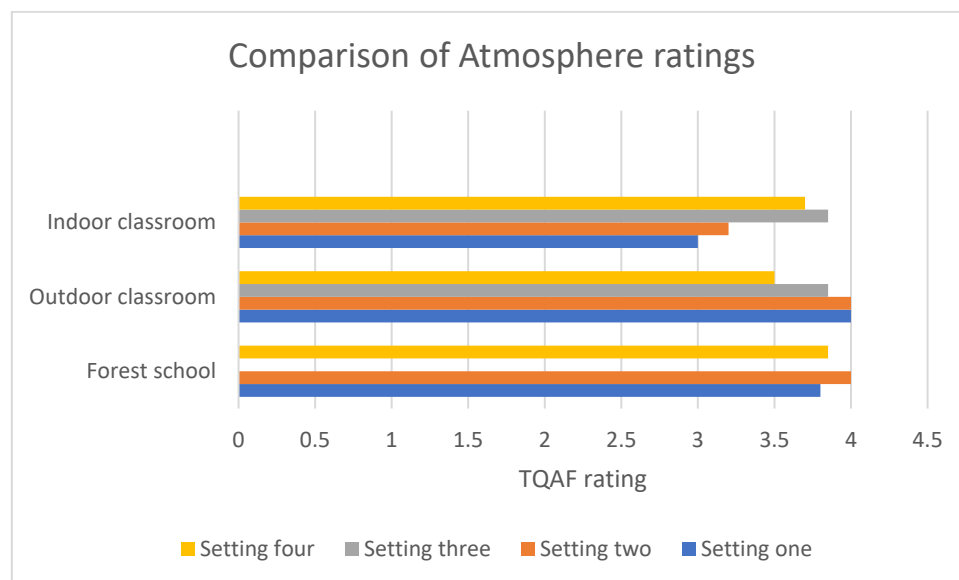


Fig. 12: Comparisons of Atmosphere ratings

### **Appendix Thirty-Three**

#### **“Expert” Three. (E3)**

Role: Well known author on communication and environments.

Notes: This interview was conducted over the phone due to geographical restrictions and the questions were sent via email in advance. The respondent sent a copy of her book in advance of the interview so that the content could be read, digested and taken into account prior to the questions being discussed further.

The book clearly sets out what the author feels to be a quality environment with regards to speech and language development, these being:

Appropriate resources – not too much plastic

Opportunities to think

Repetition of experiences

Sensitive support

Use of space

Storage and resource management

Noise management

Informed use of colour – uncrowded walls

Impact of light

The interview aim was to discuss these areas therefore and in an informed manner explore some of these in more detail.

I = interviewer

R = respondent

R - So in terms of the questions you sent out to me, with regards to definitions...

I – Yes

R - I don't, I don't see that in an ideal world there should be any kind of separation because I see as it's one space.

I – Yes.

R - And even when you've got the physicality, of for instance where you've got the day nursery where you've got two-year-olds on the first floor and actually, by the time you've got their coats on and managed to get them down six flights of stairs, you're only going to get half an hour in the shared garden outside, then we've got to look a lot more creatively at how you bring some of those experiences, some of the more naturally offered within an outside context, inside. So, you know, and that might involve being quite adventurous in terms of the use of space inside. Even downstairs. So you know there are some places where they have actually bought outdoor experiences inside. You know we've had...even like garden sheds in the room. You know we've got the kind of tools that you might find. You know we've actually gone down the route of sand on the floor, bark in the corner of the room, logs....

I – Yes.

R - All those kind of things because otherwise children are just getting an incredibly um sterile, clean um, kind of experience. Lacking texture.

I – Yes. Yes definitely and I think some settings do that very well don't they? And some settings haven't got it at all.

R – Well I don't see very much, very many that do it very well, to be perfectly honest. It's...in that kind of situation where they're having to bring outside stuff in I still see an awful lot of plastic in a lot of places I visit...

I – Yes

R – Prescriptive experience. Falsely structured, adult led experience.

I – Yes

R – So I think there's a huge amount of work needs to be done, in sharing with the very young workforce what quality experiences and environments look like.

I – Yes definitely! And that's what I'm trying to do! And I think that we're not putting enough emphasis on that outdoor play and natural environment as well. You know that, you know the forest school type experiences, and that's what I'm trying to look at as I said to you. I'm kind of looking at the quality of speech. We know, and you've alluded to that in your book.... Thank you so much for sending me that by the way. But you alluded to that in that we know that children speak more when they're outside, but what we don't know though is if their speech is better when they're in the outside and that's what I want to find out.

R – I guess the other thing is, about that, is throughout whether the children are inside or outside, or wherever they are, it's, it's looking at that ....adult.

I – Yes

R – And what they're doing. And are they that active play partner. Are they that facilitator? Are they...so what is their role? And I think...I think that that is an interesting question around how adults interact with children within an inside or an outside context.

I – Yes

R – Um, while the play is hopefully, um is it open ended outside, that's..that presents a massive challenge for many staff who have not got much experience

I – No

R – Because I find that they're, they're more comfortable with a prescriptive, um outcome led type toy or activity

I – Yes

R – As opposed to a situation where you really don't know what children are going to do with these things...are they going to put that in the mud, or whatever. I do think that the different contexts that are created present different challenges and questions of our staff development and particularly the reflection of their role in modelling language and engaging in the play as active play partners. But it's very open ended and it's very natural.

I – Yes. Now in your book you talk, don't you, about staff or practitioners behaving differently in those outdoor environments to inside. I think you talked about them kind of standing around and policing in an outdoor environment..

R – (laughter) Yes. I think, I think the book.....one of my big concerns is around the over routine -ised experience that children have.

I – Around the what sorry?

R – Kind of like an overly routine-ised....

I – Oh right, yes.

R - ....experience. Um, sometimes, in the inside environment, that keeps practitioners busy. Nappies, or you know, it's snack now, and so their day is sometimes chunked up according to what the routine is in the next fifteen minutes. And I think that there's a lack of flexibility in the flow in a lot of routine and a lot of pressure. And I do think that some of that does come back down to, in an ideal world, you would have a sliding door straight into an outside context..

I – Yes

R – ...that would be open all of the time (laughter) even though where I see that ideal situation there are many occasions when the door is not open.

I – Yes

R – And the children have to line up and all go out together. And that's sometimes to do with staff just not wanting to go out.

I – Yes. And ratios...all of those kinds of things. Yes

R – And not really valuing the understanding that for some of their children life would be so much better...

I – yes

R - ...if that door was open. Your life as a practitioner, as a teacher, would be so much easier actually because children would be highly engaged if you've got the right stuff outside and noise levels would reduce and all those things that are hugely beneficial for developing, you know, speech.

I – Speech and language? Yes

R – Yes.

I – So have you done any work, or investigated, kind of the use of forest schools and natural environments within your work?

R – It's something that I promote actively all of the time and hopefully then convert...um putting into practice some of the thinking and the ideas. It puts a huge emphasis on loose parts and greening it up (laughter). Even if you're in a concrete heart of Liverpool setting, I've done a lot of work there, where you know, in bringing in big plants, making it more natural because all the research shows that the benefits in tests reducing cortisol levels, in terms of children being able to focus more...

I – yes.

R – So I've done a huge amount of training specifically on the outside environment but, as I say, in terms of what I'd define as an environment, I like to see it as one space and I always emphasise that.

I – Yes

R – Otherwise I'm almost feeding that kind of tendency to compartmentalise learning into different....different ....areas...

I – Environments? Yes.

R – And, I mean, going further than that, when I'm looking at environments, I mean I've moved way beyond the old fashioned idea of, you know maths area...

I – Yes

R – Or, you know, the writing area....

I – Yes. It should be happening everywhere shouldn't it?

R – Yes. It's just how people organise things but again, you know, when you look at how children really learn it's not compartmentalised.

I – No

R – And so why are we compartmentalising inside, outside, maths things...you know it's got to flow. You've got to have a selection of stuff that's relevant and interesting within, you know, as in an environment that offers different contexts for learning and where children have choice, and an active, involved, engaged bunch of adults.

I – Yes

R – And that balancing...it's as simple as that. That is it!



I – Yes

R – We over complicate it.

I – Yes. And I think when we look at quality rating scales and all these things that exist out there they don't transfer between environments, do they? They very much focus on the indoors. You know, are there books available? Are there dressing up clothes, role play materials? And actually we don't need that necessarily. Just having sticks and mud and things like that are, you know, are just as useful to learning and development as are all of these other man made resources.

R – They are but then that shines a light on the depth of understanding of child development, good observation skills, and the ability to identify and make it explicit what's happening.

I – Yes. So, do you think we get hung up on the resources that...

R – Oh hugely! I mean, I mean I talk all the time that, you know, some of the best resources that I ever see have not been bought from catalogues.

I – (laughter) Yes. And paid a fortune for!

R – Why are people spending loads of money on pine cones?

I – (laughter) Yes – and bits of log!!

R – I mean, yes I suppose that they are educational but some of the stuff that is promoted is, it's just ridiculous. You know, there's a lot of money being made out of, out of catalogues.

I – Yes.

R – Which actually, you know I think people sometimes they're wanting to do the very best for children. They're wanting to have this outstanding provision but tare being wooed by some very clever marketing and actually sometimes people can make the decisions about the things which, in inverted commas, you should have. They're not the people with the knowledge.

I – Definitely

R – And I think if we really get (inaudible), that's collated in a more responsive way according to what children are motivated by, it will tend to be more of those...things like the little tinker boxes or the, you know, little bags, like you say, with sticks in and conkers and... that they can transport off. You know when people really get into, really understanding holistic, natural and thematic play then of course you're going to give children different things.

I – Yes, yes.

R – But, but there's a lack of understanding, and that's the problem.

I – Definitely

R – People have got to have, they've got to have high esteem that we might see in catalogues. They think, you know, it's lots of money so it must be great, but they never, but actually are they really, really observing what children are really interested in?

I – Yes

R – Or are we just imposing a set of things that we think are going to give us that outstanding rating that people are bothered about?

I – Yes. So if you were going to design the perfect environment then....so in your book you've listed lots of different things that you think, you know, should kind of lead into these sort of communication spaces, but if you were going to design the perfect environment what would be the three most important things? What would be your three kind of, you must have this, in your perfect environment?

R – Adults who really do have that depth of knowledge.

I – Adults? Yes.

R – They really should select adults who have got depth of knowledge, who've got great observation skills, who are active play partners, who are, have wonderful relationships

I – Yes

R – With parents as well. So the adult is the key resource in the environment, in my view.

I – Yes

R – And from there you've obviously got to look at the physical space and, you know, by that I think there has to be a variety of different contexts inside and outside which are aligned to children's developmental stage, and so on. And I think it's about assessment screening, providing visual instruction and all that. And then you've got to have inspiring provocations.

I – Yes

R – and that...it's that. Those three things.

I – Fantastic! So my last question then is what does a quality environment feel like to you. That intrinsic side of things? So, you know if you go and look round a house, people say "oh I walked through the door and it just felt right". What does that feel like to you?

R – With children in it do you mean?

I – Say that again, sorry?

R – With children in it?

I – Yes

R – So if I was going to go in somewhere I would want to feel, um, I would want to feel a sense of calm. I don't mean in an oppressive way but children engaged so to speak, child led kind of thing. Um, enough time to really be able to engage. So I'd be seeing a lot of, just, you know, when you look at things like your scales of engagement, could they be off the scale? Could they be absolutely fascinated by it? And, and without any sense of "come on we've got to tidy it up now" but, you know, giving them enough time to indulge in it. So I'd see lots of that. Um, I did feel there'd be a...when I first thought about it, um, and that comes back to those engaged adults who notice.

I – Yes

R – And just get alongside and involved or, you know, those really....a sense of sensitivity and awareness of me as an individual. And all of that I think contributes to the emotional climate. For me, I'm looking for an emotionally secure environment. I haven't mentioned that yet but I think that also, that is something that comes from what I defined in terms of the priorities. Emotional security. And also I think the other thing is that personalisation in the environment but that also underpins appropriate provocations and resources. Um...

I – That personalisation?

R – Yes.

I – What that kind of, going to individual children's needs etc do you mean?

R – Yes. Images of themselves. Reference to cultural reference so that I feel a sense of belonging. That's, I mean in terms of that feeling you're trying to generate that sense of connection and belonging.

I – Yes.

R – I think you've got to look more broadly than, you've got to look at home contexts, community contexts, that they can picture for children who've seen them. I think the environment helps to build bridges between home, community and setting.

I – Yes

R – By your context. And real furniture always. I missed out that.

I - (laughter) So that kind of feeling of all being joined up almost? That cohesion?

R – Yes. Absolutely. Less office style furniture, More homely.

I – Yes. That’s fantastic. Thank you. I think we’ve kind of covered all my questions, in that very informal manner. Is there anything else that you wanted to add.

R – No I think that’s it really?

I – Fantastic!

R – No I think...well I could go on all day and you could certainly go in more depth. You could take one strand of it and go and do a PhD on one thing (laughter) but I think that’s it for now

I – Fantastic – thank you so very much for taking time out to talk to me this morning.

**From:**  
**To:** [Tanya Richardson](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Research request  
**Date:** 14 March 2018 06:57:35  
**Attachments:**

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Hi Tanya

I have looked over the interview and tracked changes to make it read better! In this format I am happy for you to attribute it to me or quote direct if it helps. Thanks again.

## **Appendix Thirty-Four**

### **Phase One - Expert Three. (E3)**

Role: Well known author on communication and environments.

Notes: This interview was conducted over the phone due to geographical restrictions and the questions were sent via email in advance. The respondent sent a copy of her book in advance of the interview so that the content could be read, digested and taken into account prior to the questions being discussed further.

The book clearly sets out what the author feels to be a quality environment with regards to speech and language development, these being:

Appropriate resources – not too much plastic

Opportunities to think

Repetition of experiences

Sensitive support

Use of space

Storage and resource management

Noise management

Informed use of colour – uncrowded walls

Impact of light

The interview aim was to discuss these areas therefore and in an informed manner explore some of these in more detail.

I = interviewer

R = respondent

R - So in terms of the questions you sent out to me, with regards to definitions of inside or outside space

I – Yes

R - I don't see that in an ideal world there should be any kind of separation because I see as one space.

I – Yes.

R - And even when you've got the physicality, of for instance where you've got the day nursery where you've got two-year-olds on the first floor and actually, by the time you've got their coats on and managed to get them down six flights of stairs, you're only going to get half an hour in the shared garden outside, then we've got to look a lot more creatively at how you bring some of those experiences, some of the things more naturally offered within an outside context, inside. So, you know, and that might involve being quite adventurous in terms of the use of space inside. So you know there are some places where they have actually brought outdoor experiences inside. You know we've had...for example garden sheds in the room. You know with the kind of tools that you might find in a real shed, sand on the floor, bark in the corner of the room, logs....

I – Yes.

R - All those kind of things because otherwise children are just getting an incredibly sterile, clean, kind of experience. Lacking texture.

I – Yes. Yes definitely and I think some settings do that very well don't they? And some settings haven't got it at all.

R – Well I don't see very many that do it very well, to be perfectly honest. It's...in that kind of situation where they're having to bring outside stuff in I still see an awful lot of plastic in a lot of places I visit...

I – Yes

R – Prescriptive experience. Falsely structured, adult led experience.

I – Yes

R – So I think there's a huge amount of work that still needs to be done, in sharing with the very young workforce what quality experiences and environments look like.

I – Yes definitely! And that's what I'm trying to do! And I think that we're not putting enough emphasis on that outdoor play and natural environment as well. You know that, you know the forest school type experiences, and that's what I'm trying to look at as I said to you. I'm kind of looking at the quality of speech. We know, and you've alluded to that in your book... Thank you so much for sending me that by the way. But you alluded to that in that we know that children speak more when they're outside, but what we don't know though is if their speech is better when they're in the outside and that's what I want to find out.

R – I guess the other thing is whether the children are inside or outside, or wherever they are, is looking at the role of the adult.

I – Yes

R – And what they're doing. And are they that active play partner. Are they that facilitator? Are they...are they clear about their role? I think that that is an interesting question around how adults interact with children within an inside or an outside context.

I – Yes

R – Play is hopefully is open ended yet that presents a massive challenge for many staff who have not got much experience of being involved in that child led style of working.

I – No

R – Because I find that less experienced staff are sometimes more comfortable with a prescriptive, outcome led type toy or activity

I – Yes

R – As opposed to a situation where you really don't know what children are going to do with these things...are they going to put that in the mud, or whatever. I do think that the different contexts that are created present different challenges and questions around our staff development and particularly the reflection of their role in modelling language and engaging in the play as active play partners.

I – Yes. Now in your book you talk, don't you, about staff or practitioners behaving differently in those outdoor environments to inside. I think you talked about them kind of standing around and policing in an outdoor environment..

R – (laughter) Yes. I think, one of my big concerns is around the over routine -ised experience that children have.

I – Around the what sorry?

R – Kind of like an overly routine-ised....

I – Oh right, yes.

R - ....experience. Um, sometimes, in the inside environment, that's what keeps practitioners busy. Nappies, or you know, it's snack now, and so their day is sometimes chunked up according to what the routine is in the next fifteen minutes. And I think that there's a lack of flexibility in the flow in a lot of routine and it creates a lot of pressure. And I do think that some of that does come back down to the design of the space. In an ideal world, you would have a sliding door straight into an outside context..

I – Yes

R – ...that would be open all of the time (laughter) even though where I see that ideal situation there are many occasions when the door is not open.

I – Yes

R – And the children have to line up and all go out together. And that's sometimes to do with control and maybe staff just not wanting to go out.

I – Yes. And ratios...all of those kinds of things. Yes

R – And not really valuing the understanding that for some of their children life would be so much better...

I – yes

R - ...if that door was open. Your life as a practitioner, as a teacher, would be so much easier actually because children would be highly engaged if you've got the right

stuff outside and noise levels would reduce and all those things that are hugely beneficial for developing, you know, speech.

I – Speech and language? Yes

R – Yes.

I – So have you done any work, or investigated, kind of the use of forest schools and natural environments within your work?

R – It's something that I promote actively all of the time and hopefully will then convert...with people putting into practice some of the thinking and the ideas. I put a huge emphasis on loose parts and greening it all up (laughter). Even if you're in a concrete urban context like the heart of Liverpool, I've done a lot of work there, bringing in big plants, making it more natural because all the research shows that the benefits in tests reducing cortisol levels, in terms of children being able to focus more...

I – yes.

R – I've done a huge amount of training specifically on the outside environment but, as I say, in terms of what I'd define as an environment, I like to see it as one space and I always emphasise that.

I – Yes

R – Otherwise I'm almost encouraging that tendency to compartmentalise learning into different....different ....areas...

I – Environments? Yes.

R – And, I mean, going further than that, when I'm looking at environments, I mean we need to move way beyond the old fashioned idea of, you know a maths area...

I – Yes

R – Or, you know, the writing area....

I – Yes. It should be happening everywhere shouldn't it?

R – Yes. It's just how people organise things but again, you know, when you look at how children really learn it's not compartmentalised.

I – No

R – And so why are we compartmentalising inside, outside, maths things...you know it's all got to flow. You've got to have a selection of stuff that's relevant and interesting within an environment that offers different contexts for learning and where children have choice, and an active, involved, engaged bunch of adults.



I – Yes

R – And that the balance...it's as simple as that.

I – Yes

R – We over complicate it.

I – Yes. And I think when we look at quality rating scales and all these things that exist out there they don't transfer between environments, do they? They very much focus on the indoors. You know, are there books available? Are there dressing up clothes, role play materials? And actually we don't need that necessarily. Just having sticks and mud and things like that are, you know, are just as useful to learning and development as are all of these other man made resources.

R – That shines a light on the depth of understanding staff have of child development, good observation skills, and their ability to identify and make it explicit what's happening.

I – Yes. So, do you think we get hung up on the resources that...

R – Oh hugely! I mean, I mean I talk all the time that, you know, some of the best resources that I ever see have not been bought from catalogues.

I – (laughter) Yes. And paid a fortune for!

R – Why are people spending loads of money on pine cones?

I – (laughter) Yes – and bits of log!!

R – I mean, yes I suppose that they are educational but some of the stuff that is promoted is, it's just ridiculous.

I – Yes.

R – I think people want to do the very best for children. They want to have this outstanding provision but are being wooed by some very clever catalogue marketing and things which, in inverted commas, you should have. They're not always the people with the right knowledge.

I – Definitely

R – And I think if we really get provision right, that's collated in a more responsive way according to what children are motivated by, it will tend to be more of those....things like the little tinker boxes or the, you know, little bags, like you say, with sticks in and conkers and... that they can transport off. You know when people really understand authentic, holistic, natural and schematic play then of course you're going to give children different sorts of appropriate things to use. It's quite individualised.

I – Yes, yes.

R – But, but there's a lack of understanding, and that's the problem.

I – Definitely

I – Yes. So if you were going to design the perfect environment then....so in your book you've listed lots of different things that you think, you know, should kind of lead into these sort of communication spaces, but if you were going to design the perfect environment what would be the three most important things? What would be your three kind of, you must have this, in your perfect environment?

R – Adults who really do have that depth of knowledge.

I – Adults? Yes.

R – They really should select or train adults who have got depth of knowledge, who've got great observation skills, who are active play partners, who are, have wonderful relationships

I – Yes

R – With parents as well. So the adult is the key resource in the environment, in my view.

I – Yes

R – And from there you've obviously got to look at the physical space and, you know, by that I think there has to be a variety of different contexts inside and outside which are aligned to children's developmental stage, and so on. And then you've got to have inspiring provocations.

I – Yes

R – Those three things.

I – Fantastic! So my last question then is what does a quality environment feel like to you. That intrinsic side of things? So, you know if you go and look round a house, people say "oh I walked through the door and it just felt right". What does that feel like to you?

R – With children in it do you mean?

I – Say that again, sorry?

R – With children in it?

I – Yes

R – So if I was going to go in I would want to feel a sense of calm. I don't mean in an oppressive way but children engaged, child led engagement. Enough time to really be able to engage. So I'd be seeing a lot of highly involved behaviours, they could they be off the scale. Children absolutely fascinated by resources. And, and without any sense of "come on we've got to tidy it up now" giving children enough time to indulge in what's on offer. So I'd see lots of that and those engaged adults who notice and respond.

I – Yes

R – And just get alongside and involved with a sensitivity and awareness. And all of that I think contributes to the emotional climate. For me, I'm looking for an emotionally secure environment. I haven't mentioned that yet but I think that also, that is something that connects with what I defined in terms of the priorities. Emotional security. And also I think the other thing is that personalisation in the environment and that underpins appropriate provocations and resources.

I – That personalisation?

R – Yes.

I – What that kind of, going to individual children's needs etc do you mean?

R – Yes. Images of themselves. Cultural reference so that they feel a sense of connection and belonging.

I – Yes.

R – I think you've got to look at home contexts, community contexts too. I think the environment helps to build bridges between home, community and setting.

I – Yes

R – And real furniture always. I missed out that.

I - (laughter) So that kind of feeling of all being joined up almost? That cohesion?

R – Yes. Absolutely. Less office style furniture, More homely.

I – Yes. That's fantastic. Thank you. I think we've kind of covered all my questions, in that very informal manner. Is there anything else that you wanted to add.

R – No I think that's it really?

I – Fantastic!

R – No I think...well I could go on all day and you could certainly go in more depth. You could take one strand of it and go and do a PhD on one thing (laughter) but I think that's it for now

I – Fantastic – thank you so very much for taking time out to talk to me this morning.

**Analysis of theoretical stance shown throughout this interview**

This participant was an advocate for nature to be brought into indoor environment as well as the outdoors as felt that cortisol levels would be reduced as a result. They were not keen on outcome driven learning but instead promoted holistic, open-ended, schematic play, but viewing the adult as the key resource. There was also a need to be culturally reflective and to reflect the community in which the setting was based.